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WALTER GRÆME

OR

A HOME AMONG THE HILLS;

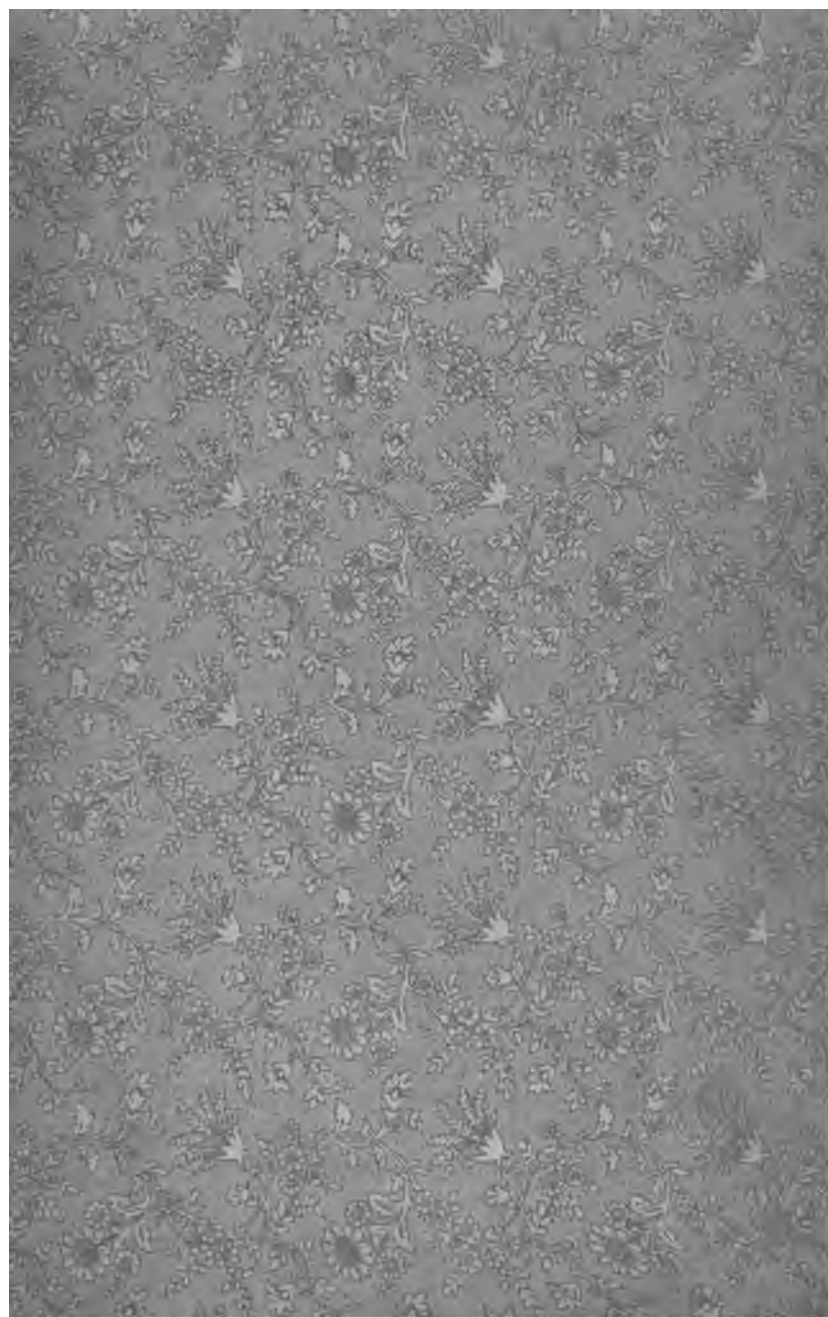
AND OTHER POEMS



THOMAS FERGUSSON

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WALTER GRÆME, AND OTHER POEMS.

(Fergusson)  
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# WALTER GRÆME

OR

A HOME AMONG THE HILLS

And Other Poems

BY

THOMAS FERGUSON

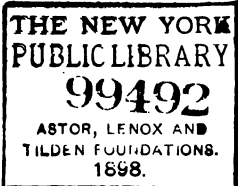
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1898





THIS Volume my heart dedicates to my departed Wife. The long Poem, and many of the shorter pieces, were written more than thirty years ago, when our wedded life was young, and when she was my guide and my inspirer. They were, however, laid aside at the time, and became in a sense forgotten ; but her unexpected death has brought me many sad and solitary hours, and my thoughts have wandered back to those memorials of a vanished Past. I publish them now as her Memorial Wreath, and, such as it is, I lay it with a reverent hand upon her grave—earth's holiest spot to me.

DUMBARTON, February, 1898.



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WALTER GRÆME.



WALTER GRÆME ;  
OR,  
A HOME AMONG THE HILLS.

---

No tale have I to tell of Troy divine,  
Or hero-deeds of earth's old chivalry ;  
I but attempt some record of a life  
Which I have spent among the nameless poor.  
Nor do I deem that in the eye of Truth  
I soil the garments of fair Poesy  
When I withdraw her from heroic themes  
Where Nobleness and Prowess mix their blaze,  
Or Grandeur flaunteth in her palaces,  
And lead her by an unreluctant hand  
To humble dwellings and to quiet shades  
Where runs the current of man's common life.  
For in the lonely shieling of the hills,  
And in the rustic hamlet, and in streets  
And darkened lanes of cities, I have found  
Most of the virtues that ennoble man :—  
Firm perseverance, a large common-sense,



A heedfulness of truth, a fine perception  
Of the invisible ligature that binds  
The common earth to the majestic heavens,  
A calm, rude majesty of word and gait,  
The patriot's ardour, Mercy's tender glow,  
A loving reverence for the ties of home,  
The pleasant laughter of low-lived Content.  
And honoured faces, even as now I write,  
Bright with the gleam of virtues like to these,  
Come from the dead Past and look up at me ;  
And in the task to which I set myself  
With a pure pleasure and a reverent heart,  
I shall again meet with them ; and I trust  
To brighten all my story with the worth  
Which I have met with in obscure abodes,  
In simple lives of men who lived and bloomed  
Their peaceful hours as fragrantly away  
As the dead roses of our pleasant vale.

## I.

If there be aught I might have coveted  
Of earthly lineage, it is that I  
Had drawn my derivation from those Sires  
Whose names were honoured round our winter hearth ;  
Brave souls, the product of rough stormy times,  
Who never truckled to the might of man,

Or grudged their blood for their old Covenant.  
Those lowly heroes of my native land,  
Lowly no longer, with their names for aye  
Emblazoned in the heraldry of heaven,  
And treasured in their countrymen's deep hearts ;  
Who dared their unknown names against a king's,  
And rolled out banners, regal as his own,  
And took for Arbiter the Lord of Hosts  
To see if Scotland's liberty should die ;  
Who filled our mountain-clefts and lonely moors  
With rugged, touching eloquence of tongues  
Which ere to-morrow might be stiff in death ;  
Men who, in earnestness to bring about  
God's great Millennium, reversed God's plan,  
And turned, in fervour of undoubting faith,  
Their innocent ploughshares into hurtful swords,  
And peaceful pruning-hooks to deadly spears,  
And, pausing from their bloody work, looked up,  
Nor vainly, for a blessing.

From such stock,  
Were a choice given me, or did wish avail,  
I might have coveted to draw my blood.  
But I know nothing of my ancestry ;  
I cannot scour the dead sea of the Past  
'Neath which my ancestors lie whelmed for ever,  
No echo of them to be heard on earth.  
I have no chart to steer by in that sea,

Nor ancient family-tree, down which to flit  
With eager finger and with kindling eye,  
Making dumb ages find a tongue for me.  
I never heard my great-grandfather's name,  
Yet whether from a coldness in the blood,  
Plebeian meanness, or a false contempt,  
I little envy the heraldic scroll,  
Finding sufficient of content in this,  
To owe my being to the mighty God.  
And who can tell me if there may not be  
As much concern among the hosts of heaven  
Whene'er an infant, fresh from God's own hand,  
Is cradled in an unregarded cot,  
As when the heir to some august domain  
Opens his eyes amid magnificence.  
Nor can I see, although I scrutinize  
Each nook and cranny of ancestral pride,  
Owning all nobleness I meet with there,  
How any spirit need be held base-born  
Whose name is written in the Book of Life.

I never looked upon my father's face,  
Never was dandled on a father's knee,  
For ere I had attained the shore of life,  
Where I should glad him with my little smile,  
Pale Death had sent him, sorrowful, away ;  
And but a few moons after my sad birth,  
In sudden sequence of misfortune's blows,

My mother, too, laid down her weary head,  
Fleeing from persecution of disease  
To the calm shelter of the peaceful dead.  
Ah, mother, never known, thy life to me  
(As now I think of it in distant days)  
Seems sorrowful and dreamlike ; and my heart  
Oft sadly musing, pities thee, and here  
Pays this late tribute to thy memory :

I see thee, mother, wearily tread o'er  
The path of sorrow, which thou long hast trod ;  
I see thee leave me, while thou weepest sore,  
Unto the keeping of the orphan's God.

My mother, unto whom this task was given,  
Sadly to forfeit all a mother's joy,  
I shall not know thee when we meet in heaven ;  
My mother, wilt thou know thine orphan boy ?

And as thou lookedst down with loving eye  
And saw me smiling at a stranger's breast,  
Did not some envy reach thee in the sky,  
Ruffling the depths of thine eternal rest ?

And as love paints thee 'mong the gleaming throng  
That Faith holds up to Piety's fond gaze,  
Dost thou, in pauses of the angels' song,  
Recall to memory those olden days ?

I would I could remember thy fair face  
As it hung o'er me with endearing smile,  
Although mine eye distressfully might trace  
New lines of sorrow on thy brow the while.

Yet why thus linger with a vain regret ?  
Our love is interrupted, but not ceased ;  
Death that hath severed shall unite us yet,  
When my ripe spirit is from dust released.

I never knew, and yet I never missed  
The gentle nurture of a mother's hand ;  
For in the reach of a large charity  
That finds sad opportunity in woe,  
A peasant-mother took me to her breast  
In trustfulness and hope, and set me down  
Among the merry prattlers by her side,  
To bud and blossom through the various year.  
My foster-mother, fair and merciful,  
I see thee in the brightness of those days  
When thou wert splendid in thy russet gown ;  
I see thee lead us where the hedgerow hides  
Its feet 'mong wild-flowers in the dewy grass,  
The while we, jealous, battle for thy smile ;  
I see thee in thy nook with busy fingers  
Mending the mischiefs which our clothes have met ;  
I hear thee read us, with a reverent air,  
The wondrous message which thy God has dropped

Down from the merciful and pitying heavens ;  
I hear thee teach our infant lips to pray  
In childhood's simple words, each infant lisp  
Prelude to hallelujahs in the heavens ;  
I see thee leave us with thy mother-smile,  
As we lay down at night our weary heads  
Among sweet visions where the angels stray ;  
I see these things, and see them through a tear.  
Bright things that may not die ! O good to know,  
All pure things are immortal. Ye old years,  
Ye come again with blessings for my heart,  
Years garlanded with flowers of memory !  
How those old homely and penurious years  
Bring me yet messages across the past,  
Fraught with the wisdom which the lowly learn.  
How many trials poverty must face  
Which wealth puts from it with a careless shove ;  
Yet half man's wisdom are his daily trials,  
Daily laid weak and vanquished at his feet.  
How bright the record of a lowly life,  
Spent in the path of unambitious duty,  
As seeing Him who is invisible.  
How many deeds that beautifully sit  
Upon our poor humanity, have come,  
Blest silent arrows of the bow of love,  
From quivers of the lowly—gentle deeds  
That spring like blossoms out of kindly natures,  
Those lilies in the valley of our life,

Which the Almighty Hand shall one day gather  
Into a beauteous and surpassing garland  
Fragrant and fresh for ever in the heavens.  
To be born humbly and be humbly-hearted  
Is a perennial blessing ; not removed  
In feeling from the many of the earth,  
No pride to pamper and to spoil the heart,  
No flattery to distort the truth of things,  
Nothing but duty in its simplest guise,  
With no corrupted or corrupting glare,  
Bright with the light enkindled from above.  
And so I have esteemed it wise to think  
The fairest flower is virtue in the shade,  
Virtue unconscious of admiring eye,  
Shedding the odour of good deeds around,  
And ripening in beauty for the sky.

And now I come to thee, my foster-father,  
And name thee with a kindly reverence.  
I see thee and thy mate, with mutual arm,  
Breast the great billows of the surge of life ;  
I see thee toiling in thy patch of earth,  
Wrenching subsistence from its niggard hand ;  
And all thy toil is that thy household troop  
May spread their table with that frugal plenty  
That well suffices to keep health afoot  
And lend to gratitude an upward wing.  
I see us, gleesome, on the lengthy nights

Of gleaming winter, which with kindly pinch  
Drives us all in-doors, while the heaped-up fire  
Officiates at its ministry of warmth,  
Play round thy knees, while all our little home  
Rings with the ceaseless tumult of our din.  
And cause have I to reverence thy name  
Who taught'st my wayward and rebellious heart  
To listen to the undersong of peace  
That ever breaketh on the reverent ear  
Amid the pure serenities of home ;  
And taught'st me, likewise, by the silent tongue  
Of a repineless life, that calm Content,  
Like the house-sparrow, often builds in thatch.  
Thus I revere thee with a kindly love ;  
And yet the waving of the churchyard grass,  
That sings thy requiem, makes sad distinction  
Betwixt thy memory and that of those  
Who travelled with me, side by side, those years,  
And still breathe with me earth's accustomed air.  
Thy face, long pallid, casts some shade to me  
On all thy life ; yet my hushed spirit walks  
In that shade's twilight with divinelier step,  
And sees bright visions that are only seen  
Beneath the duskiness of Death's dark wing.  
But though I darken with prophetic gloom  
Even now thy history, long years must pass  
Ere that the current of my story brings  
That piteous morning when we laid thee down



To wait in silence and in peacefulness  
The glad appearing of new heavens and earth.

I have a brother whom I dearly love,  
Two sisters who are dearer still to me ;  
(I count them as my brethren, though there runs  
In our bloods' current no warm kindred drop)  
And when I joined their brotherhood, the boy  
Had seen eight summers redden on the hills,  
The pale-faced Margaret may have counted six,  
And little May had seen her third year out.  
The youngest was an infant at the breast,  
And she and I grew strong on the same milk.  
If it be more than fable that we ever  
Imbibe the spirit of the breast we suck,  
I and my sister, as we quiet lay,  
Embosomed at the fount of that dear breast,  
Were drinking draughts of that delicious lore  
That makes perpetual summer in the heart ;  
The lore of mercy and of kindliness  
That well their gracious tide up from a heart  
Touched finely in the springs—that ransacks earth  
For means to mitigate the smart of woe,  
Nor circumscribes its ministry by earth,  
But with a prayer knocks at the gate of heaven.

Our home lay in the bosom of the hills,  
Which screened it so, that winter in his spite

But feebly shook his terrors over it,  
And no wind but the privileged south-west  
With burly visitation swooped upon it.  
Down the defile up which the warm south blows,  
The eye could catch a sudden glimpse of sea ;  
And it was pleasure to us little ones,  
Upon the rustic seat by the house-side,  
Embowered with roses, on the summer eves  
To sit and watch the passing of stray ships,  
And wonder, when the lonely night came down,  
If the poor sailors saddened on the sea.  
And on wild winter days, from our snug window,  
To see the boats skip, playthings to the waves,  
Was fascination terrible, and touched  
Our spirits with a pang of sympathy.  
A meadow spread before our cottage door  
Its breadth of daisies ; and not distant far  
There ran a streamlet, busy at its song ;  
Brawling in winter, but in summer's heat  
Feeling its feeble way among the stones  
That roughened its small channel ; and I thought  
We had the bravest garden in the world,  
Gay with blue hyacinths, coy mignonette  
That bribes the breeze to run and tell she's there,  
Before the eye can mark her—violets dim  
With sad thoughts working in their dreamy eyes ;  
Bright roses, blushing fragrantly till doomed  
Red leaf by leaf to disarray themselves ;

And other flowers, less famous, but as sweet.  
Even in your beauty and your pride, ye flowers,  
You strike me, when I see you, with a touch,  
Some touch of desolation ; for you ever  
Image earth's beauty and earth's fleetingness.  
And I remember, in my early years,  
When standing shivering in the flowerless fields,  
I sometimes wondered, in my childish way,  
How summer so offended, as to need  
A scourge of storms to drive her from the earth  
In coldness, and in nakedness, and tears.

Here in this lowly nest we five reposed,  
Waiting till time and circumstance should bring  
Their changeful accidents, which bring in turn  
The broadened thought that mellows and matures.  
Here, in this little nest, we five reposed,  
While that our wings were growing for the flight  
That yet awaits us, past the moon and stars.  
Poor feeble wings for so adventurous flight !  
Ah ! sad to think, as every day can show,  
When the heart mutinies against its good,  
How slow corrosion of base circumstance  
Eats through the spirit's wing, that nevermore  
Man shall attempt the steep flight into heaven,  
But rest in low contentment ; he who should  
Acquaint his forehead with the gleam of stars,  
And in the light of Heaven's high wisdom make

The mysteries past death familiar things  
In the calm converse of his daily thoughts.

Here, in this little nest, reposed we five.  
God keep the nestlings from the cruel swoop  
Of the despoiler's wing. Poor innocents !  
As now I think of us, how I could wish  
The year all summer, and our lives all song,  
Earth beautiful as a delicious dream,  
Nought round us harsher than the balmy air,  
And nothing sadder than the sunny beam.

Fond but vain wish ! soon to be beaten back  
By the rude blasts of sorrow hasting on  
To chill our household into misery.  
For now, when busy memory goes forth  
Upon the sea of my sequestered life,  
And, like a diver, brings my dead Past up  
And quickens it again with wondrous art  
And spreads it on my page, her furthest footing  
Is 'mid the dismal dreariness of woe :  
A scene of horrors, grouped confusedly,  
And scarcely real in that mist of years.  
My mother, wringing her distracted hands,  
Then in a moment tossing them on high  
Half in a dismal hopefulness of prayer,  
Half in wild recklessness of heart that thinks  
It never, never can be comforted ;

Her eye wild gleaming with a frenzied fire  
Which not the torrent of thick tears can quench ;  
Her loose hair flying o'er disordered shoulders  
Or hiding decently her bare breast ;  
Her cry, the cry of the heart's misery,  
Not bodily pain ; the restlessness of foot  
That searches for some cranny where despair  
May creep in darkness, and in darkness weep  
That saddest burden of her woes away ;  
The deadly pallor of a face not dead :  
This vision, weirdlike, glimmers on my eye  
When memory juts to her extremest verge.  
The vision this ; and this the circumstance :  
My baby sister, prattling innocent,  
A little toddler of some three years old,  
Who but so recently had hung with me  
Upon our mother's breast, had disappeared,  
And after weary and foreboding search  
Her mother, horror-struck, beheld her lie  
Within a treacherous eddy of the brook  
That drowned her darling, and went singing on.  
Belike the little stumbling feet had gone  
To pluck some glittering flower upon the bank,  
And tumbled there from the green earth to heaven.  
Ah, hapless mother with the weary breast,  
And eye that loveth not the pleasant sun  
Nor any touch of human happiness,  
Time, gentle healer, Time, blest sanctifier,

Shall yet bestir him at his gracious task  
Of lighting with a sunny hope the gloom  
And desolation of thy stricken heart.  
And so it was—months buried 'neath their moons  
Sorrow's wild wail, too passionate to last,  
And gave instead meek-eyed serenity,  
The scarce-repining of the gentle sigh,  
The quiet breathing of calm pensiveness.  
And thus it is, as most of us have seen,  
When sorrow darkens any human home  
She ever seeks with a benignant hand  
To scatter seeds of hope that yet may bloom  
Within the fissures of the broken heart ;  
For suffering brings to us this gentle boon,  
That when she wrings she purifies the heart,  
And when with one hand she takes earth away  
Brings with the other the pure joys of heaven.

We seldom spake of this calamity  
Around our peaceful hearth ; but yet for years  
It cast some shade of sadness on our home ;  
And often imaging my mother's grief  
In my still musings, I have tried to frame  
The touching story to a simple rhyme.

## THE MOTHER TO HER LOST CHILD.

Mary, thy little life is o'er,  
Thou sleepest in the sod ;

No human tongue can tell how sore  
I grudged thee to thy God.

I sought for thee, while many a tear  
Would from my dim eyes start ;  
I sought for thee, while many a fear  
Smote at my weary heart.

And did I, though I, weary, sought,  
Not hear thee when thou criedst ?  
And thine own mother, did she not  
Bend o'er thee when thou diedst ?

And when I found the resting-place  
Where thou didst breathless lie,  
How earnestly the quiet face  
Looked at the quiet sky !

Ah me ! within that lonesome brook  
So near thy home to die ;  
To lay thee down and quiet look  
Up at the quiet sky.

Sad, sad and long my parting look  
That sorrow-darkened day,  
When those that loved thee came and took  
Thee from mine eyes away.

I set a white rose at thy head,  
Pale lilies at thy feet,  
And when their sweetness they outspread  
I think 'tis thou art sweet.

The birds are hopping o'er thy head,  
I see them every day,  
And thou, now in thy lowly bed,  
Wert innocent as they.

Thou sleepest calmly, little thing,  
My darling and my pride,  
Waiting till friendly death shall bring  
Thy mother to thy side.

And when the angel's trumpet blast  
Shall ope our slumbering eyes,  
We'll rise together at the last,  
Together to the skies ;

To that bright land, where to the Lord  
We'll raise our gladsome hymn,  
To which earth's griefs shall lend a chord  
Untouched by Seraphim ;

That land, where glories ever new  
Light up the saints' abode,  
And rivers of delight flow through  
The Paradise of God.



## II.

We never were at school, yet never thought  
Ourselves unschooled ; for on the winter nights,  
Under our father's able generalship,  
We laid brisk siege to every single letter  
Of the long alphabet, until at length  
They all capitulated at our feet,  
And were our serviceable slaves for ever.  
But our chief monitor was Benjie Brown.  
Old Benjie in his better days had been  
A steward in the house of some grand squire,  
In virtue of which honourable service  
He was our high revered authority  
In point of manners ; but his great strength lay,  
As he himself knew, in a solemn bow.  
Old Benjamin, quite rich enough he thought,  
Had now returned unto his youthful home  
To mellow his old bones among the hills,  
And threw himself, with even a headlong zeal,  
Into the matter of our bringing up,  
And with a patience that provokes my praise  
He made us masters of his store of learning.  
But yet not learning in its proper sense,  
But rather the refinement of our manners  
He made his chief vocation, and thus he  
Took as the high aim of his moral being  
To teach us "the discretions," as he called them.

Ah ! how he toiled in that ungrateful soil,  
And kept on sowing with a simple faith  
That a rich crop of glowing courtesies  
Would cover him with glory : simple faith !  
So hopeless that 'twas almost chivalrous.  
The manners make the gentleman, he said, and hence  
His faith in " the discretions " he so loved.  
To accept gracefully, courteously decline,  
A proffered service, was a work of art  
That in good Benjie's eyes approached a virtue.  
Benjie, the kind, the pleasant, the polite !  
What though thy bright, magnificent idea  
Would never be translated into fact,  
Thy work is not all lost ; and though thou giv'st  
A far-off worship unto gentle blood,  
Thou art no recreant to the proud traditions  
That have ennobled men but lowly born ;  
And saw'st that it was better far to be  
An honoured man among thy lowly peers,  
Than to be nothing in the skirts of rank ;  
And therefore gleefully thou hiedst thee home  
To see the flowers thou carriedst in thy heart  
Through many years, bloom sweetly on the lea,  
And feel again the soft winds of thy youth  
Blow the old fragrance through among the hills ;  
And in the hour of trial and distress  
Thy neighbour-mountaineers have found in thee  
Blest sympathy and hope, and often has

Thy shadow darkened on their doors for good.  
A humble artist, limning on the canvas  
Of thy calm, lowly life, the pleasant outline  
Which heaven looks down upon with loving eye.  
Thou brave old Benjie, 'tis no fault of thine  
The graces will not grow among the hills ;  
Live on, and teach thy heart the noble wisdom  
And gentle solace of a kindly life :  
And when at last Death comes among the hills  
Looking for Benjamin, he there shall find  
(So let us hope in love and charity)  
A heart not unaccoutred for the long  
And wondrous journey that awaits him then.

And so our education sped apace ;  
As thus we all turned over the first leaves  
Of the strange Book of Knowledge, which begins  
In vague half-nothings of our childish days,  
And then impels adrift maturer thought,  
Unto whose inquisition and research  
The heavens will grant no respite evermore ;  
That thought which soon outsoars all earthly things  
And wanders groping through eternity,  
And brings from that far land, when it alights  
Again upon the earth, where it had birth,  
A saddened feeling for man's sordid world  
Where want and woe, and necessary cares  
So jostle even eternity aside.

Yet this soul-sadness vivifies the life,  
As sleep that prostrates renovates the frame.

Another monitor we had besides ;  
A cottar, whom, even in my childish days,  
I had a reverence for, as one of those  
Whose virtues had attraction for a child.  
A genial-thinking man, who deemed a frown  
Had no more warrant to a human face  
Than the still sunlight of benevolence.  
Yet not that everlastingness of smile,  
That simper, ready for whate'er you say,  
Which I have seen make faces hideous,  
And which provokes my spleen more than worse things.  
A general noble-heartedness of soul  
Lay on the rugged features of this man ;  
Features o'er which you saw that sorrow oft  
Had travelled, with her keen spear in her hand,  
Spear too familiar with the naked heart.  
A man whose not uncultured heart was filled  
With a keen sense of what is beautiful  
In glowing nature, and as keen a sense  
Of gratefulness to the Almighty God  
Who had environed him with breezy hills,  
And with those golden promises of bliss  
That lit his lowly life up with the splendours  
That have their being in eternity.  
Yet though with these things his deep heart was full,

Reserved, like to his countrymen, he spake  
But seldom of those high and awful hopes  
That flash a glory on the common world.  
But as I cast my eye along the track  
Of years now perished, but not perished all,  
The mortal years have borne immortal fruit.  
I well can see that to that man I owe  
Some of my reverence for virtue's name ;  
And much of my now heartfelt sympathy  
With feelings of the too-unvalued poor.  
For in maturer and more thoughtful years  
I learned with him, not only calm content  
That my life's station was a humble one,  
But to be thankful for my lowly birth,  
And that a peasant's was my childhood's tongue ;  
For thus I have been taught (would I could brand  
The dear conviction and the simple truth  
Into all spirits, as by words of fire)  
The essential nobleness there is in man  
(Man, whether high or humble) that needs not  
The poor earth's dignities to make him great.  
I learned to think that in the lowly cot  
May flourish all the virtues of the hall ;  
I learned to think that the great stately hall  
Can scarce know all the virtues of the cot :  
The silent battle even for daily bread,  
Which teaches daily fortitude and faith ;  
That keen, peculiar luxury of giving

When sharing of our crust to others' want,  
Is self-denial in its purest sense ;  
That humbleness of spirit likeliest  
To thrive and flourish in obscurity,  
And which is Christianity's chief grace.  
These lowly virtues, with their kindred ones  
So native to the soil of poverty,  
Taught me to set a value on the poor,  
But never taught me to despise the rich.  
Was not the Son of the Eternal poor ?  
And did He not tread through Judea's land  
A homeless peasant in a peasant's garb ?  
Hail ! hoddin grey, for ever honourable !  
A God once wore it on our own old earth.  
'Tis God that justifies, who shall condemn it ?  
See, then, your nobleness, ye sons of toil :  
And though proud worldlings cannot see this truth,  
Oh ! see it for yourselves, and that you hold  
The station hallowed by the Son of God.  
Lift up your heads, sons of the Mighty One :  
The selfsame everlasting gates that oped  
To let the King of Glory in of old  
Shall open yet for you, ye lowly ones ;  
And in that ever-blooming land where God  
Has built for Faith her many-mansioned home,  
Ye shall hold converse with archangels yet.  
Sons of the Highest, ye poor sons of toil,  
If ye can see beyond the veil of flesh.

Thus sketch I my ideal of this man,  
Known by the unheroic name of Wood ;  
Old Andrew Wood, my quiet type of hero,  
For whom, and such as whom, the sun performs  
The daily miracle of new-born light ;  
For whom, and such as whom, our harvest fields  
Smile as they crown themselves with sheaves of plenty ;  
Heroes whose trophies are the peaceful deeds  
Which shed sweet happiness round dismal hearths ;  
Heroes whose armour has been forged on high ;  
Who conquer on their knees ; for whom there waits  
A blissful welcome to heaven's hero-land ;  
For not a spirit that inhabits there  
But somehow was heroic on the earth.

My brother Oswald was but slow at learning ;  
A tricksome urchin, who far more enjoyed  
A raid among the hills, or fun and frolic  
With lads and lasses of the countryside,  
Than to sit down demurely to his book,  
While winds were scampering thro' the mountain-gorge,  
Or fish were gleaming in the crystal stream,  
Or game were sporting in the fields around.  
No dullard was he, though at books but dull ;  
But when his curiosity was set  
Rightly on foot it lent his industry  
A willing hand, so that no youthful slave  
E'er worked with more will in the fairy mine

Of Cinderella and the wondrous slipper ;  
Or cruel Bluebeard ; or the two small Jacks  
Who made their wits a match for the fierce giants.  
At lore like this he was a greedy learner,  
And when by chance he could possess a book  
Fraught with such treasures, he would disappear  
For half a day among the mountain wilds,  
Or couched securely in the leafy screen  
Of some umbrageous tree, and there in peace  
Would sip the nectar of those honied tales.  
A free, frank, fearless boy, with merry laugh  
That shot good-humour upon every face  
That came within his gay and harmless glee ;  
Stout and dark-haired, with ruddy cheeks of health,  
An eye keen as a goshawk's, but from which  
A dash of merriment oft twinkled out  
Whene'er old Benjie, with his sober face,  
Grew eloquent on the proprieties.

But, as compensating for this small slight,  
My sister Margaret by the hour would sit  
And listen to Ben's stories of great dames  
Bedizened past belief with gold and gems,  
And beautiful as sunshine when it twines,  
With witchery and grace, its warming beams  
Among the petals of a new-born rose ;  
And as she listened, from her eye would shoot  
Gleams of that dazzling, but ill-omened fire



That has no warrant to blaze anywhere,  
But least should sparkle in a poor man's home.  
Ah Margaret, Margaret, vanity is oft  
Vice in the bud ! and when I saw thee gaze  
Too earnestly, and with a joyous flush,  
Upon thine image in the flattering pool,  
I feared lest evil days might come to thee  
Before the story of thy life was done.  
Yet our whole household loved her, for her face  
Was sweet to look on, and her pleasant voice  
Sent its soft music thrilling to the heart ;  
And although vanity might be a guest  
Too favoured in her breast, I never thought  
That she despised as mean her lowly lot,  
Or ever meant that any act of hers  
Should strike lone Desolation through the home  
Where she was nurtured with a pure intent,  
With true ambition that outsoared the sky.

And now I turn unto my little May,  
The thought of whom is sunshine to the heart,  
Which, when it touches even the mists of sorrow,  
Tints them with beauty, ere they roll away.  
Within the circle of her deep blue eye  
Peace sat in calm contentment—on her tongue  
Hung the soft graces of pure love and truth,  
And in her common breath she seemed to catch  
The air serene that bloweth from the heavens.

She loved pure Nature in her every mood :  
When the first breath of Spring bids the pale snowdrop  
Rise from its sleep to lead the flowery van  
And be a prophecy of genial hours ;  
When leafy Summer, thronged with singing birds,  
And Autumn, with a rustling garland on,  
Sit in the sun, or lurk in shady dells ;  
Or when lone Winter sends his piercing howl  
Through the bare forest, teaching the old boughs  
A mournful music. Joy it was to her,  
In Nature's gentler mood, to meet the morn  
In its pure radiance, tripping from the east  
To wake the green earth with a kiss of love ;  
For dear to her the innocence of morn,  
Arrayed in dewy finery of gems  
Ere yet the sober and paternal sun  
Bids it lay by such grandeur ; and she loved  
The gorgeous sunset crimsoning the west ;  
Sweet hour of sunset, that complacent hour  
When Meditation, with the dew, falls down  
Upon the heart of man, making the morrow  
The brighter for the soberness of eve.  
And with a musing eye she loved to watch  
The pale moon stealing through the quiet heavens  
On messages of mercy to us all ;  
And to her finely balanced mind no rose  
That bloomed in beauty by the dusty road  
But was a pure ambassador for God ;

No flower but used whatever simple tongue  
Of eloquence it had, on virtue's side,  
To keep men pure, and make them happier.  
And all this tenderness, and earnest joy  
In varied Nature's ever beauteous face,  
Was the outgoing of an inward love  
And gracefulness of soul, that threw a charm  
On her domestic motions ; and her life  
Was as some sunny thing on which to look  
Was hopefulness, and pleasure, and sweet peace.  
So grew she up, among the lonely hills,  
A solace and a blessing ; and as each  
Of the fair seasons passed, it dealt to her  
A growing charm of beauty, till her name  
Unto my ear became a melody,  
And hid itself, all fragrant, in my heart.

## III.

Years travel slowly ; but they passed, and plucked  
My childhood from me—happy years of childhood,  
Embosomed in the vale of Memory,  
Bright with the radiance of unsetting suns,  
And fresh with breezes that delighted leap  
Through the fair scenery of that young land.  
O beauteous thought ! that, howe'er sorrow dog  
Our later footsteps and declining years,

Heaven has ordained it that we all begin  
Our awful journey to the unknown land  
With childhood's ready smile, and careless mirth  
Of our frank opening youth, when the fair earth  
Lies all around us with her store of wonders,  
Among whose flowers no canker-worm appears,  
Nor hint of sadness to perplex our joy.

And so my childhood has blown past, like some  
Calm, lingering cloudlet 'cross untroubled skies,  
Until I am a lad of seventeen years,  
Suddenly wakened from the pleasant dream  
Of half-unconscious youth, and shown instead  
A glimpse of a strange world, where I should go,  
Far from my home and quiet of the hills,  
To join the eager and the bustling throng  
Who in great cities seek for golden sands  
In life's cold current, doomed, as it might seem,  
"To live laborious days" and sleepless nights  
Chasing the phantom that enchants the world.  
O ever perilous search, in which poor man,  
Unconscious or else heedless, squanders oft  
The awful gift of immortality.

Now came the day when I must say good-bye  
To all I knew of tender in the world,  
And learn what Time had for me in its keeping.  
How all unlike to other days was that !

It was mid-winter with keen frosty air.  
How dismal looked the aged apple-trees  
In the hoar garden ! and the berry bushes,  
Stunted and bare, seemed such to fancy's eye  
As Summer ne'er could wheedle into fruit.  
The streamlet turned his song into a dirge ;  
The cheery redbreast piping in despite  
Of pinching winter ; the great hills around,  
Where I had taught my youth to meditate,  
And from whose slopes I oft, delighted, watched  
The great sun set in splendour ; quiet smoke  
Ascending slowly from the scattered cots ;  
The thousand things, that at all other times  
Were unto me but little, started then  
Into a strange distinctness as my eye—  
My wet eye—measured them. Benjie came o'er  
To give me his fond blessing and last hint  
Concerning "the discretions," which I now  
Should put in practice on a higher field.  
And Andrew Wood, the night before I left,  
Came o'er to see me, with his pleasant face.  
We had much sober talk, and good advice  
He gave to me in plenty ; and I try  
Here to re-gather somewhat of his strain.  
He told me I was now a voyager  
Upon a mightier sea ; and if my God  
Had fashioned so my fate that I should make  
A voyage long of threescore years and ten

To the blest shores of immortality,  
He warned me that I never cease to fear  
For my frail bark on life's tempestuous sea,  
With every wave a sleepless enemy ;  
He bade me keep pure Virtue in my sight,  
"For Virtue," said he, "Virtue is the star,  
That polar star, by which the mariner  
Steers o'er Life's treacherous and troubled sea  
To his calm haven in eternity,  
That troubled sea where dangers lurk as thick  
As shells and seaweed on the tawny shore.  
And train thy powers, now in their eager prime,  
To steadfast labour and to lofty thought  
O'er life and life's strange teaching, knowing this,  
Each crown in heaven was laboured for on earth.  
And ever keep with thee the love of nature,  
Which will speak peace unto thy heart when grieved  
With paltry fret, or treachery of men.  
The meek-eyed flowers, let gentle thoughts of them  
Intrude at all times in thy willing mind,  
And when a wrong is done thee, round it throw  
The healing fragrance of the joyous air ;  
And when as now the great and rounded moon  
Rolls through the heavens in splendour and in joy,  
See thou forget not reverently to gaze  
At the majestic wonder. Wisely heed  
The life thou livest ; not from fear of death,  
But from heart-reverence of Truth and Virtue.

If riches come to thee, then use them well  
And thankfully ; if not, fret not thy heart,  
Though thou be poor for ever ; though thy friends  
Be destitute and needy as thyself,  
And though thy portion, after all is done,  
'Be but a green grave and forgetfulness.'"  
So ran the old man on, with pleasant words  
That smote like sunshine through the dusky room ;  
And when I parted from him on the moor,  
The keen winds whistling round, I stood and watched  
The homely figure fading in the gloom,  
And blest the dear heart tutored into wisdom  
Among the bleak wilds of his native hills :  
And although lowly, and his name scarce known  
Save by his rustic compeers, I yet felt  
That in the wide grasp of his searching thought  
He was no common man, and that his life  
Was something great shone on by something greater ;  
For he was visioned with an eye to see  
A present God, although invisible  
And only known in symbol on the earth.

The parting with a mother whom we love,  
With a kind father, with the household band  
Whom we have prattled with through all our years—  
This is a trying though a common thing,  
And this distressful hour had struck for me.  
My mother kissed me with a silent tear,

A tear that is a prayer, a burning tear  
That sayeth nothing, and yet sayeth all.  
I kissed my sisters, and ran, weeping, off.  
The boat that was to waft me o'er the sea  
Appeared in the blue distance like a bird  
That swept the waters in its smoky flight ;  
And as we hasted onward to the port  
My father counselled me with earnest words :  
As that I should be chary of companions ;  
That all at home were sure I never would  
Rob them of their proud hope to see the boy  
Who had been reared with them an upright man ;  
That perseverance I should make my friend,  
And Truth and Honesty my bosom friends.  
And now I see the big tear in his eye  
As he besought me, in his Scottish tongue,  
"To mind the God wha made me, and hae aye  
A bawbee hoarded for the faitherless."  
By which I knew well that he meant I should  
Be kind and generous whene'er I might,  
Remembering former days, and how that I  
Had sheltered been when I was fatherless.

At length, upon the noisy, bustling pier,  
My father, silent, grasped my hand in his ;  
Last touch of home that I should take with me  
Into a world I knew not. Well I knew  
Some dismal aching at his heart would lie



As he trudged homewards ; and that round the fire  
Which burned that night less cheery than of yore  
Upon the hearth at home, would fall a hush  
Among the kindly voices ; while the tongue  
That little spake, lest it should thus betray  
The heart's infirmity, sent Memory  
A willing cruise across the many years  
Since first I joined them ; parted now at last.

Soon were we ploughing through the surging sea,  
Up Scotland's western and magnific firth,  
Past the sweet pastoral and romantic spots  
To which bright Summer sends the citizens  
Of weary towns, far from all din and smoke ;  
Spots dear and pleasant, to which many give  
A consecrated corner in their hearts  
Through the laborious and unjoyous year.  
And soon I landed in that town of trade  
Where I long led a pinched mechanic's life :  
And not in vain ; for many a thing I learned  
From keen encounter in that trying school.  
There I grew self-reliant, and I saw  
That busy heads had the most dexterous hands ;  
I saw that temperance was ever housed  
In snug abundance and a happy home ;  
I saw intemperance was in league with shame,  
With penury, and sorrow, and disease ;  
I saw that industry befriends the man

Who plies, assiduous, his daily toil,  
And him who with an earnest, studious mind  
Digs for hid treasures in the land of thought.  
For we must dig for every golden truth ;  
The primal curse is on all noble things ;  
We have to sweat for all we ever learn  
Of greatness, or of nobleness, or truth.  
I saw thus as I sat at home o' nights  
Groping my way through the dim world of thought,  
That all sweat is not corporal. I learned  
That he who all day hammers the hot iron  
Sleeps the contented night, while he whose soul  
Wisdom hath smitten with her own fair face  
Oft presses a vain pillow ; that the brain  
Which has been touched with fellowship of things  
Higher than mortal, tosses oft awake  
While brawny Labour smileth in its dreams.  
O men of my degree ! let us remember  
That there are toilers though in other ways  
And other fields than those in which we sweat ;  
Men who have laboured, and are labouring still,  
Up the steep steps to where God keeps reserved  
His mysteries for the pure and reverent eyes  
Of patient watchers through long days and nights.  
And while we ponder these things, ne'er forget  
That men in our position, with no spur  
Save the high urging of their noble souls,  
Have ofttimes planted their laborious feet

On pinnacles of science, and on heights  
Where the pure breezes of fair knowledge blow.  
Yes, there are workers in our earnest world  
Uncatalogued among the sons of toil ;  
And there are workers, too, among ourselves,  
Whose toil is sharpest through long hours of night.

This wholesome discipline of daily toil  
Was fraught to me with good, good obvious now ;  
For ere that I was broken to the yoke  
I was stiff-necked and stubborn, and my pride,  
That hid itself beneath a calm composure,  
Though not offensive, had yet certain root  
Within me ; and anatomizing now  
My feelings in that sad and distant time,  
I may thus state them : Had I been a star,  
I had put discord in the sphery music,  
Were I not Venus, and burned brightest.  
Though unambitious seeming I was yet  
As covetous of honour as the sea  
Is covetous of water though it drink,  
Unslakeable for aye, a thousand streams ;  
And if I am to tell the very truth,  
The absence of the salutary rein  
Of an accustomed home inclined my heart  
Soon to forget or slight the good old precepts  
I had so lately heard from loving lips.  
And yet, instead of falling down in grief

And asking Heaven's forgiveness, I began  
With vain and shallow sophistry of youth  
To speculate upon the origin  
Of human evil, daring to arraign  
The just procedure of Heaven's ways to man.  
'Tis easier to sneer than to repent,  
And to hoot blasphemies against the stars  
Than to sit down in abjectness of heart  
And look our evil doings in the face,  
And own that Heaven is no more ours by right.  
O, sad, sad days, when I was never happy !  
O, sad, sad thoughts, which I could wish erased  
From the memorials of that guilty time !  
Yet it was now, when my weak, anguished heart  
Felt the full burden of its misery  
And was slow-veering to a sounder sense,  
That first I learned to find in Poesy  
A solace and a blessing, as a friend  
Who comes serenely in the gloom and brings  
Some dear enchantment with him for the heart ;  
And by the purity that ever weds  
With sweetness and with beauty, tells us how  
Even error can be turned and bent to good  
By firmly fixing in the soul this truth,  
Ne'er to be questioned, that all sin is death—  
That when we rear ourselves unrighteous bowers  
And loll among their shades, fell snakes will come  
Out of the flowers and sting us unto death.

It was amid the tumult of these thoughts  
That I sought Poesy, and found her Peace.  
And is it true, then, what I ever deemed  
A bitter and a dismal heresy,  
That man's deep nature is akin to tears,  
And never yields its sweetest melody  
Until his breast, like the sad nightingale's,  
Is poised against the thorn ? Is sorrow, then,  
The chiefest fountain whence the Muses draw  
Melodious thoughts that travel through the earth  
On their high pilgrimage ? I cannot tell.  
Let me shut down this chapter of my life,  
Like some close charnel with offensive breath,  
And walk with Hope beneath serener skies.

## IV.

I come now to the pleasant, studious nights,  
When, 'mid the books which then I learned to love,  
I sought the fellowship of kingly minds ;  
Men who have crowned themselves with regal thoughts,  
And whose broad brows the nations have bound round  
With loyal praises and with reverence.  
But chiefly those great souls whose burning thoughts  
Ran touched and kindled into Poesy  
I loved to meditate—o'er whose high page  
Sublimity outpoises her dread wing,

Awing men's spirits with divinest glimpse  
Of unknown regions through majestic words.  
Yet, more than even sublimity, I loved  
The glowing page where I could bend and catch  
The fragrance of the beauteous, tender thoughts  
Which bring sweet solace to humanity ;  
Where flowerets blow, and the green murmurous woods  
Invite contented steps ; where purling brooks  
Babble for ever to the quiet air ;  
Where the still sunshine sleeps upon the roofs  
Of rural cottages, on whose trim fronts  
The rose and honeysuckle mix their breaths.  
These thoughts I loved ; the calm and sweeter thoughts  
That charm the mind, and nestle in the heart,  
And which when read, for ever wed and mingle  
With all we deem as tenderest, and lie  
Like streaks of sunshine in the memory.  
And what I loved with such a pure delight  
I tried to follow or to emulate ;  
And with what cunning my right hand possessed,  
I worked and laboured at the grateful task  
Of building into shape and comeliness  
The aimless wanderings of my untrained mind ;  
Nor do I deem myself presumptuous  
(Or deem it as presumption in another)  
To tread in the bright footsteps of the great  
And glorious masters of my country's song.  
And though beside these Giants I be dwarfed,

I and my thought, I deem it right to seek  
The sweetest and most perfect utterance  
Of all my thoughts, to which I can attain.  
For my own thoughts, whatever be their worth,  
And whether gathered from the earth or heaven,  
Are all the store of treasure with which God  
Entrusted me to find my lonely way  
Through earth's perplexities to heaven's dear rest.  
And this high purpose, sacredly pursued,  
Begets and fosters self-analysis,  
And self-acquaintance is the chief of knowledge,  
Which must, like charity, begin at home.  
O, let us ever with keen eye peruse  
The manuscript and volume of our souls,  
Books that indeed are "written for all time,"  
And shall, when Time droops down his weary wing,  
Be read and fingered through eternity.

Thus far and high I taught myself to aim ;  
Yet thus I first learned humbleness of heart ;  
For when I pondered the majestic thoughts  
Of the crowned monarchs of the centuries,  
I saw that nobleness of soul was oft  
Twinned with meek modesty and gentleness,  
And that sweet Love, with her resplendent face,  
Was the glad sunshine and the light of life ;  
That pride is from below, not from above ;  
Yea, pride is sin, a darkening hateful film

Upon our vision, that should ever see  
The great, the gifted, and the poor on earth,  
As fellow-dwellers in one little star  
Which God has hung to twinkle in the blue ;  
And that for all who love Him the great God  
Spreads the same banquet in the blooming land ;  
That heaven has golden harps for all alike,  
And that the peasant's horny hand shall touch  
The chords of glory and of ravishment  
As lightly as the softest in the land.

And so I strove and combated to urge  
Pride and weak vanity from out my breast ;  
And as there is no emptying the heart  
Of vices and defects without the poise  
Of the opposing virtues, I now sought  
To open wide my bosom to Love's beam,  
And to drink deeply of God's fount of truth,  
Whose living waters still give humbleness  
To him who stoops and drinketh ; and I thought  
Of the pure precepts, and as pure examples,  
That had been furnished me among the hills ;  
The quiet, kindly deeds of lowly hearts  
That wait in peace for their inheritance.

Thus diligently sought I to acquaint  
My heart with wisdom ; and to aid my task  
I wooed fair Nature in her robes of green



When Summer laugheth out the eyes of June ;  
And on the calm eves, many an hour I stole  
Of pure enjoyment, dashing to the knees  
Through brushwood and the tangle of the glen,  
Or lying placidly among wild flowers,  
Perusing mysteries written in their eyes,  
Breathing the blessing of the quiet time,  
And fortifying faith with peaceful thoughts.  
O pleasant days ! O happy, studious nights,  
When first my soul conceived a higher aim  
And faithfully pursued it ! while the hours  
As they sped by breathed over me the joy  
That recompenses labour, as I saw  
My thoughts assume distinctness on my page,  
Decked with such beauty as my hands could reach.  
O happiness ! when for a few brief days  
Out of the heart of every golden year,  
I breathed again the breezes of the hills,  
And tasted the sweet "charities of home."  
For Nature spread before my willing steps  
A banquet that ne'er staled ; and when I left  
That dear society for toilsome days  
I tried in my still musings to re-catch  
The rapture of those moments, and to paint  
Myself still sitting on the mountain's brow,  
In calm thoughts pondering sweet Nature's face,  
And how she blesses hearts that love her steps.  
And of these musings, girt about with peace,

Some I transcribe now to my present page ;  
Part, to exhibit my new phase of mind,  
Part, as a record of long vanished joys.

*Transcription.*

Here sit I 'mong the lonely mountain crags  
Where solitude hath built herself a home  
Which none disturbeth but congenial spirits.  
'Tis salutary for the youthful soul  
Who just enough hath mixed with the base world  
To know that it is base and foul of heart,  
To leave the busy and engrossing streets  
And with a humble, yet rejoicing heart,  
To traverse valleys where wild roses bloom  
And learn the wisdom of the silent hills.  
The blithe breeze rustles to me where I sit,  
Humming the old tune that is ever new.  
Thou breeze, I thank thee, ceaseless traveller,  
Thou light-winged minister to rosy health,  
Who in well-doing never weariest.  
Whence comest thou on thy benignant way ?  
Perhaps thou heard'st Eve singing in her bower,  
Flushed with the rapture of blest Paradise ;  
Or, as she thoughtful paced, perhaps thou may'st  
Have scattered round her Eden's holy balm,  
And tossed the tresses on her sun-browned cheek ;  
Perhaps thou strayedst among far sunny isles,

And sped thee over the majestic sea,  
Wafting the cheery sailor to his home ;  
Or danced thee prettily through summer woods,  
Or lingered in green valleys 'mong the hills.  
And now, on thine adventurous way thou com'st  
To bluster round my ears, and spill fresh health  
Upon my cheek ; and as thou brushest past  
On thy blest pilgrimage, I hear thee say :  
“God sent me to thee, for He loves thee, man.”  
Yes, it is good unto the pure in heart,  
Ere yet the burden of the years is felt,  
Far from the dull round of their daily toil  
To seek the quiet of some grassy vale,  
Or the rude bluster of the rocky shore,  
Where Meditation, with an upward gaze,  
May ponder o'er the sacredness of life.  
And they who with a meek and gentle soul,  
And with a wise and an observant eye,  
Brush through the heather of the mountain side,  
Or pierce the deep glen where the streamlet lurks,  
To them shall be revealed those hidden ways  
Where the pure wander with a calm delight,  
Girding themselves about with holy thoughts,  
Holy repentings and yet holier prayers,  
To fit them for the strife that comes to all.  
Up then, thou weary and benighted one,  
Whose earth is God-less, though He fill the air ;  
Go take thy sorrows and thy sullen cares

And shed them on the bracing mountain-winds ;  
Go thread the tangle of the woodland brake,  
And as thou goest, half in unbelief,  
Thine eye shall catch new visions in the gloom,  
And hope from the calm murmur of the rill.  
Ah, there is wisdom blowing o'er the moor,  
And growing in the woods, that none may know,  
Except that sympathetic brotherhood  
Whom Nature's hand hath delicately touched,  
And whom some instinct drives away from towns.  
O banish not the Maker from His earth,  
Nor from thy blinded heart ; but know, O man,  
That God doth mean thee reverently to tread  
The flowery carpet of redeemed earth ;  
To trace His greatness in the starry heavens ;  
His goodness in the pure sun's warming beams,  
In dropping clouds, in the unwearied breeze,  
In the rich harvests, and the tuneful streams.  
Thou weary one, get this faith in thy heart,  
Open the door and let it gently in ;  
And radiant beauty then shall walk thy earth,  
And thenceforth evermore shall be to thee  
A voice unearthly in the sighing breeze,  
A revelation in the blue of heaven,  
A new divineness in the hush of night.

Thou mountain-stream that rushest by my side,  
Down the deep channel which thyself hast dug,

Bright nursling of the hills, as on thou leap'st  
And headlong tumblest over stones that charm  
Thy uncouth fretting into melody,  
Methinks thy haste is yearning of the heart,  
And that thou longest to get back again  
To ocean's bosom that engendered thee ;  
And yet when thou attain'st the pleasant mead  
And strayest among flowers, thou loiterest  
On thy green-girdled way as if thou hadst  
Weakly forgotten the high enterprise  
Thou formedst in the silence of the hills.  
Sad allegory oft of man's career !  
When, in the season of impetuous youth,  
Like the pale crescent growing to the full,  
He purposes to flood the world with light ;  
And when his soul, full-freighted with the hopes  
That gleam with splendours of eternity,  
Turns unto God, as sunflowers to the sun ;  
Till in some moment of unguarded ease,  
Surprised in its own citadel, the soul  
Yields to the Tempter and his subtleties ;  
And, all forgetful of the golden hopes  
That clustered in sublimeness round his heart,  
He lays his head, with its poor lost divineness,  
Down in the dalliance of luxurious flowers.

Yet, surely, I belie thee, gentle stream,  
Thou art no image of a soul's decline ;

But as thou strollest, humming thy low song,  
Among embowering bushes, shedding round  
Cool verdure and fertility, thou art  
An image rather of those liberal souls  
That freshen all around them ; and as thou  
Broadenest onward to the sea, so they  
Broaden and deepen on their bounteous way,  
Enriched with many an unspoken blessing  
And the calm radiance of a gentle life.  
Fair stream, I love thee as a living thing !  
I never wander by thy shady bank,  
I never see me mirrored in thy wave,  
I never list the prattle of thy tongue,  
But that some feeling from the infinite  
Flashes its revelation over me,  
And reads to me new meanings of old truths  
To hide and treasure in my inmost heart.  
And thus I love to wander, like the bee,  
Through the delightfulness of Nature's land,  
In which with hand all silent and unseen  
She spreadeth out her beauty like a scroll  
Whereon are written wisdom and delight.  
O Nature, Nature ! happy he who loves  
To lay his head down on thy mother-lap  
And look with rapture into thy fair face  
Nor weary of thy beauty. Joy of joys  
To see thee gleam through the delightful air  
Clothed with thy sunbeams, and to feel thy breath

Rich with wild fragrance as thou dancest past ;  
To see thy beauty in the green of earth  
And in the crystal of the wandering stream ;  
To loiter 'mong the hedgerows and to hark  
The gladsome carolling of woodland birds,  
Or scarcely-seen larks hymning in the blue ;  
To hear the breezes whisper to the leaves  
Tales of glad sunshine and of dewy morns ;  
To see the great sun on the verge of sight  
Set with a flush of glory o'er the sea,  
The waveless sea, as beautiful as if  
No storm had swept it since its natal morn ;  
To toil through purple heather on the hills  
While the blood courses with a new delight  
And health puts on its roses, which bloom best  
When buffeted by breezes, nor depart  
From the loved landscape till the shadowy night  
Advances her lone starry sentinels.  
Thrice happy he who thus can tread the earth  
And feel her beauty stirring at his heart,  
And whether from his wanderings he wend home  
To a proud castle or a cottage door,  
Sweet dreams shall ever haunt his peaceful sleep,  
And a fair retinue of gentle thoughts  
Shall strew upon his way those calm delights  
Which heaven keeps garnered for the pure in heart.  
For earth has shewn her mysteries to him,  
And the green nook that nestles in the glen

Is now a sanctuary, where, absorbed  
In its own hallowed musings, the bright soul  
Gets daily new apparelled for the skies :  
And thus the good and beauteous things of earth  
Become a ladder all enwreathed with flowers,  
Whose topmost round nigh reaches unto heaven,  
Up which the spirit may delighted climb  
To heavenly heights of vision, where the Lord,  
Known as the Man of Sorrows upon earth,  
Shall reach to him that hospitable hand  
Pierced in Jerusalem, and take him in  
To the blest mansions of ensheltering rest.

Full well I know that duty is no toying  
With the fair muses, nor man's life a dream ;  
And though I love them, the green mountain-side  
And the dim forest are no home for me.  
I seek them as a shrine, where evil thoughts  
And evil feelings are oft charmed away ;  
Yes, as a shrine, indeed, where He who knows  
Our human frailty, with considerate hand  
Hath scooped a pleasant and calm harbourage  
For the tossed spirit to betake it to,  
Far from the selfish conflict that perverts  
Man's holier nature, making him forget  
Or disbelieve his contract with the skies,  
And losing thus to virtue and to God  
A needed arm in the great strife of earth.



Quiet and thoughtfulness are best for man.  
Great thoughts are born in silence, and base thoughts  
Must die in solitude ; and he who goes  
Into the quiet of the pleasant air,  
Shall feel the sunshine that embrowns his cheek  
Soft steal into his heart ; the wayside flowers  
Will tell him innocent tales ; and to his cares  
The green-banked streamlet will sing lullabies.  
And though retirement may not quite uproot,  
As by a spell, deep sorrow or remorse,  
It will insensibly transmute them so  
That sorrow will be changed to solemn thought,  
And solemn thought wings ever to the sky ;  
And on the tears of penitent remorse  
New hope shall smiling sit, as weeping shower  
Hangs forth its rainbow to emblazon it.

I thank thee, Nature (yet to me thou art  
But sign and symbol of the Great Unseen),  
I thank thee, I was fashioned by thy hand  
To find a pleasure in the solitude  
Which broods in blessing where thy beauty lurks ;  
That thou endowedst me with an eye that marks  
A sweet beneficence in wilding flowers  
And the green grandeur of the spreading tree ;  
An ear that hears pure homilies that are  
Silently syllabled in drops of dew ;  
A heart that feels the gracious influence

Of self-communion in the quiet ways  
Where thought and happiness walk hand in hand,  
And high endeavour follows not far off.  
I thank thee, Nature, for these innocent joys  
Which ne'er decrease by using, but are blest,  
Like the old widow's store of meal and oil,  
With new replenishing that knows no waste.  
And thus, as I sit musing, sunny hopes  
Steal in their gentleness across my heart  
And bid me in their joyfulness rejoice ;  
And having beautified all nature, point  
With rosy finger to the gates of life,  
Linking together thus with holy band  
The beauteous earth and unimagined heaven.

## V.

I had but few companions, as I found  
That most companionship is but a clog  
To the aspiring soul ; for few of youth  
Feel those blest longings of the heart which seek  
Their high solution in ennobling deeds,  
And in still communings for many an hour  
With nature face to face, listing the chime  
Of the sweet harmonies of earth and sky ;  
Those longings, doomed upon a restless foot  
To wander on until at length they find  
Something to crown our lowly lives withal.

One home there was to which I often found  
My willing footsteps tend ; a happy home  
Which wedded love lit with its hallowed beam.  
Mark Chisholm won his bread in daily sweat  
Of his fast-wrinkling brow ; a man who spent  
Few leisure moments in ignoble ease ;  
But when the labour of the day was past  
He kept himself still busy at that task  
In which to weary is to dim the crown  
Which Heaven awardeth to faith's perfect work.  
A poet was he in his strain of thought ;  
And though he little had attempted verse  
He felt the rapture of sweet Poesy,  
The maid divine that singeth through the earth  
And bids us as to banquet of the skies,  
And sets to Hope's undying melody  
Those strange, uneasy stirrings of the heart,  
And discontented gropings after things  
Higher and nobler than our souls have reached.  
Unto this bourne Mark Chisholm had attained,  
An often-troubled but undoubting man  
Who went through scenes of suffering and woe  
Oft sad at heart, yet ever in the gloom  
Beheld the constant, gracious stars arise  
To cheer him with their undespairing beam.

O how he loved that little, blue-eyed thing,  
His beautiful, his loving, darling wife !

How cheery was the home round which she flung  
The fragrance of her love ! how blithe her laugh,  
Which it was dear heart happiness to hear !  
Methinks I see Mark now, his day's toil o'er,  
Striding on gaily to his peaceful home ;  
I see the smile that lies in wait for him  
On Lucy's face when he shall ope his door ;  
I see him, their blithe supper o'er, sit down,  
As Lucy thinks, a monarch on his throne,  
Herself upon her footstool at his feet ;  
I see her spread upon his royal knees  
Some volume that he wishes her to read ;  
I hear her trip it on the tongue of love ;  
And now I see him issue from his home  
On that blest errand which the heavens have sent  
Us all upon, with mercy in our heart ;  
I hear him at the bed of pain and sickness  
Dispense low soothing words, and to the eye  
Of the betossed and dying sufferers  
Point out their home on high, whose towers are seen  
Already gleaming in the opening heavens ;  
I hear him praying with his fervent voice,  
And see the pale and shrivelled hand held out  
From the poor bed in mute acknowledgment ;  
I think of all this self-denying life  
Until my spirit, touched with reverence,  
Descries new beauty, and new nobleness  
In labour's grimy and ungainly face.

O beautiful to see heaven's warriors oft  
Come from the rugged phalanxes of toil ;  
And as the sweat-drops glitter on their brow,  
To see humanity's primeval curse,  
The curse of labour, with its dower of sweat,  
Turned to a beauteous and ennobling crown.

No man I ever knew did feel as he  
Earth's near relation to the judging heavens,  
And that not merely in the higher phase  
Of spiritual circumstance, but even  
Its common history and scenery.  
And when with him I sought the quiet air  
On summer expeditions, speeding on  
Through the green valleys or up heathy hills,  
He would at times stand still and look with tears  
On the extended prospect, feeling that  
The mighty Giver of that bounteous gift  
Of beauty and of grandeur, meant that all  
The sunny landscape was for joy to man.  
And being then aware that sometimes I  
An evening dedicated to the muse,  
He bade me keep my heart in healthful play  
By pondering Nature's ever varying face ;  
"Hark," said he, "to the wondrous, ceaseless hymn  
Which Nature singeth in the listening ear  
And hideth as a treasure in wise hearts.  
Go in thy joyousness, and bid the winds

Gambol around thee ; bid the summer sun  
Play on thee his benign artillery ;  
Bid the brooks dance before thee, tripping it  
To their own wandering music ; bid the flowers  
Bring incense to thee in their heaven-filled censers ;  
Bid the larks crown thee with their rapturous songs ;  
Bid golden sunsets and great moons put on  
For thee their glories ; bid the wondrous night  
Hang over thee her spangled canopy.  
This do, perceiving with no dubious eye  
That all this beauty, all this gentleness,  
This wealth of fragrance, this pure feast of joy,  
Is spread by God's good hand invisibly  
To cheer us mourners on His troubled earth."

Then added he : "There is reserved for me  
Another service and another fate.  
God sent me on an embassy to earth,  
Not laying on me the sweet Poet's task  
To fling out beauteous and majestic thoughts  
Bright soaring on their own wings through the earth ;  
Nor in the temper of the olden seers  
To judge the nations in the Great King's name,  
Upon my shoulder bearing a dread quiver  
Filled with the red-hot thunderbolts of heaven ;  
But in another, and a gentler mood,  
To take my place around a lowly hearth  
And learn the golden lesson of Content

Beneath the cottage roof ; ever to strive  
That round our hearts and hearthstone there might beat  
A tide of love and love's sweet happiness ;  
To live among the poor, and do the work  
And the stern duties of a common man ;  
Yet ever in the silence of calm thoughts  
Pondering the cross of old Jerusalem ;  
And as the seasons graciously revolve  
Learning the lesson of the falling rain,  
And the glad sunshine and the healthful breeze ;  
Cradled in poverty and reared in want  
To covet nothing but the grace of heaven,  
And clearer vision of its gleaming crown ;  
Until at last the winter-storms shall rave  
Above my low and unremembered grave.”  
As these impassioned words died on my ear  
And vanished 'mong the sunshine, my own eyes  
Were filled with tender, yet with blissful tears,  
And I discerned that Wisdom, like pale Death,  
Fell democrat and leveller of things,  
Calls with a silent and impartial step  
At the poor cottage and the dome of kings.

## VI.

One well-remembered summer-time came round,  
Bringing again my yearly homeward tour ;

And urged in letters of my father oft,  
Mark and his wife agreed to go with me.  
Right merry was our passage o'er the sea,  
And pleasant was our travel through the fresh  
And flower-girt gorges of the friendly hills ;  
And now the dear old cottage came in sight,  
Hidden 'mong clinging roses on the wall ;  
That nest from which long years ago I flew  
With mingled sorrow and expectancy,  
But unto which I gaily wandered back  
In many a golden dream, wherein I was  
A cricket leaping on the hearth at home,  
Loud-chirruping my sweet contentment there.  
And now I came, in fond reality,  
In sight of the old walls, with the two friends  
Whom with calm circumspection I had picked,  
Like two choice pearls from the stream of life.  
We went up cheerily, with muffled glee,  
But when I entered at the open door  
A strange, unwonted gloom was over all.  
Some sense of dull discomfort lay athwart  
And discomposed the features of the old  
And well remembered mansion of my heart.  
The window-shutters, partly opened, made  
An artificial twilight in the day ;  
The fire—long unreplenished—had gone out ;  
The clock ticked mournfully upon the wall :  
My mother sat all dismal and alone,



And froze me with a miserable smile  
When I went up to greet her. "What is this?"  
I asked in sorrow and in fearfulness:  
She shook her drooping head, and sought again  
With her sad eyes to reperuse the ground.  
I saw May musing by the apple tree  
In the trim garden, and I hurried out  
To learn from her what sad calamity  
Had visited our dwelling. She was pale  
When first I saw her, but turned ghastlier  
When she saw me, and heard my questioning.  
She came and put her hand in mine, and raised  
Her meek eyes unto heaven (even now I see  
The sunlight gleaming in their gracious drops),  
And while the hand trembled in mine as trembles  
The leaf in the sore tempest, she bent now  
Her solemn gaze upon me, and said: "Pray,  
Go pray, my brother; for no human heart  
But one straight from the converse of the sky  
And counsels of the Infinite, may hear  
Unvengefully the tidings of this day.  
Trust not thy heart, my brother"—here grief stayed  
The pathos of her language, and a tear  
Fell in its misery through the sunny air.  
When calm again, she said: "Brother, be brave,  
And bravery is kind and charitable."  
I left her; and along the silent way  
I wrestled with the bodings of my heart,

And cried to heaven in mercy to transform  
All hate and vengeance into calm forgiveness.  
(For now a fear that bordered on the truth  
Had crept awry into my trembling heart.)  
And when I sought again my sister's side,  
She stooped and plucked a daisy at her feet,  
And said, still looking at the simple flower,  
And letting fall a tear into its cup :  
" We have no sister, brother, she is fled."  
What a strange calmness in the hopeless words !  
Yet well I saw the record of deep grief  
In the enforced composure of her face.  
We stood in silence for some minutes' space,  
As sorrow-stricken, comfortless a pair  
As the deep sunshine shone upon that day.  
Returning slowly to our cheerless house  
We found our father talking with the guests  
Whom I had brought at such an ill-timed hour.  
How shrunken now his face, on which I looked  
A year ago with pride and reverence !  
How shame and grief steal from the countenance  
Its pleasant comeliness, and from the frame  
Its strain of vigour and of stalwartness,  
And in a short night do the work of years  
In burdening shoulders with decrepitude !  
May sped to Lucy with a friendly hand :  
And as they stood together, I could see  
The close resemblance which the faces bore,

And which, as I remember, when at first  
I met with Lucy drew my friendly love—  
I liked her for her likeness unto May.  
They sat down by my mother's side and talked  
To her in words of a kind, kindred grief :  
And as the words fell (many a gap between  
Of silence, or of sighs) I grieved to see  
Her old head bent in hopelessness of grief.  
My mother, time was hoarying thy hair  
Gently, yet surely—but the almond tree  
Shall henceforth flourish on thy drooping head ;  
Time, ever busy, shall be busier now  
In chiselling wrinkles on thy face so fair ;  
And thy sad heritage, as child of man,  
The heritage of shame, and pain, and woe,  
Shall be dealt out to thee with lavish hand  
And be poured, molten, in thy weary breast.  
Yet when we look into the roots of things,  
Who shall resolve me if pale sorrow is  
Not unto man God's chief ambassador  
Since heaven most woos us in the guise of grief ?

I learned, alas ! three nights gone by she fled  
(She never then was named by her own name),  
Unknown and unsuspected by them all,  
With some young scion of a gentle house.  
And when the night grew on old Andrew Wood  
And Benjie Brown, both came as comforters.

They blent their grief with ours, to know sweet peace,  
So long our guest, had sadly left our home,  
Scared by a daughter's all unnatural hand.  
For Benjie, he could only trust that yet,  
Howe'er it seemed, the issue might not be  
As dreadful as the horror of our fears ;  
For was hē not a gentleman, and would  
His gentle breeding not have taught him this :  
To spare the wrecking of a poor man's home ?  
" Ah, she is young, and may be innocent ;  
'Tis man's part to lament, not to condemn,  
And rigour is not righteousness," said Mark.  
And Andrew, too, said with a sober brow :  
" I miss the sweet face, with its merry laugh  
Of ever-ready welcome. Ah, poor thing !  
Her smile was sweeter than the flowers of spring ;  
Ah, she was pleasant, but "——

" Unworthy too,"

My father cried, " I know what you would say ;  
To lay her home in ruins, lay it bare  
To every wind that blows, turning its joy  
To heavy-hearted hopelessness and shame.  
I can hear none condemn her but myself ;  
She was my child, brought up upon my knees,  
Round whom there twined so many sunny hopes  
That shone far, far away, which ever bind  
Us to the face that we have loved so long,  
And though much sinning she is yet my child."

The old man ceased. There is a time for words,  
There is a time, too, for relieving tears.  
He bowed his head, loud-sobbing like a child.  
O sad to see the father weeping there,  
Over the body of his murdered hopes !  
O sad to think that not an eye was dry  
That night in that so lately happy home,  
And all hearts wretched where Content late dwelt !  
How much of suffering one bad act can bring !  
One cloud can hide the sun's vast continent,  
Making earth chill, and drear and desolate !

When, after tears had brought their short relief  
And our two visitors had said good-bye,  
The wind had risen to a steady gale.  
I sallied forth and slowly sought the woods,  
Whose groaning ever seems in unison  
With the dark mystery of troubled thoughts,  
As if some spirit of unrest and woe  
Inhabiting that dull, secluded scene,  
Called on all troubled and perturbed things  
To mourn in concert and in sympathy.  
It brings a strange relief, akin to joy,  
To be abroad on such a roaring night  
When some dull pain is eating at our heart,  
Which the storm's fury lashes into rest ;  
And when the fierce commotion of the time  
Gifts us with new-born faculty to rise

And toss our sorrows to the angry winds,  
And bid them rend them. Sweet bewilderment  
It was to me to stand within the wood  
And hear the storm crash through among the trees  
As if in wild delirium of glee ;  
To feel my blood stir with the tempest's wrath,  
To launch my spirit on the tempest-car,  
And catch a rapture where might lurk a fear.  
I glanced up at the crescent labouring moon  
Breasting the clouds that swept across the sky ;  
And as I looked some shadow caught my eye  
Darkening the moonshine falling through the trees.  
I looked in sudden wonderment around,  
And saw a figure, ghost-like, in the gloom.  
I followed, 'twas a woman's ; soon I had  
Pale Margaret, living, sobbing in my arms.  
"What mystery is this ? Why are you here ?"  
I asked in wonder, fearing her reply.  
It was some moments ere her sobbing left  
A passage for her words. At length she said,  
Her cold arms clasping me around the neck :  
"Why in the wood, my brother, this wild night ?  
Does sorrow for thy erring sister drive  
Thee here to wander with all sleepless things ?  
I cannot speak to thee ; and yet I must."  
I grasped her closer in my fearful arms  
Lest this might be a dream, and I should wake,  
And, waking, lose her from my arms for ever.

“O tell me, sister, are you innocent ?  
Or come you back a maimed and undone thing,  
For men to gossip of around their fires,  
And God to chasten in His hot displeasure ?”  
“That moon,” she cried, among the deafening gusts,  
“That climbing moon, and that bright lonely star  
That peers through the rent cloud there, know as much  
Of earth’s pollution, as I know of sin  
With that man whom I loved.” Blow on, ye winds ;  
Well have ye blown repose into my heart,  
Which now rests calmly as the rainbow sleeps  
Above the strain and tumult of the storm.  
Thus thought I ; and I raised a thankful eye  
To God, whose watchful providence had thus  
Brought Hope’s blest dawn at such unlooked-for hour.  
And then I kissed her ; but forbore to ask  
The story of her wrongs. She recommenced :  
I scarce could hear her for the roaring winds  
Which flung the sweet, sad words athwart the night,  
The gloomy, roaring and bewildering night.  
“Ah ! there is folly near akin to sin,  
And in its consequence as sad as sin.  
Such is my folly. Walter, pity me.  
I seized at greatness ; and I thought me safe  
In honourable marriage ; but it proved—  
Ah, brother ! let me spare thine ears the tale.  
I loved him with a pure but foolish love ;  
I loved him, nor will rail upon him now.

He would not have me" (ah, even now I feel  
How the winds took the sad and simple words  
And with a buffet flung them in my face);  
"He would not have me as his faithful wife,  
And never should he have me otherwise.  
Last night, heart-sick, I wandered to these shades  
By help of moonlight and the gleam of stars;  
But when the morning shone upon the scene,  
I could not venture to the door I shamed.  
I saw my mother standing weeping there;  
I threw myself in torment on the grass,  
And filled the daisy-cups with brimming tears——"  
I stopped the sad narration; and I thought  
Of sweet May standing desolate with me,  
Dewing the daisy with *her* falling tears,  
And saw how, all unthought of and unknown,  
The sinner weepeth as the sinned against.  
I led her home, my dear, lost Margaret,  
The lost now found in honour and in truth,  
Engaging weeping May to take her in  
When the worn household had retired to rest.  
Sleep calmly, burdened souls; the morn shall bring  
Rest to the weary, hope unto the hearts  
That hoped for nothing underneath the skies.  
Sleep on, ye mournful; the unstaying hours  
Are knitting silently a robe of peace  
Wherewith to gird you when ye shall awake;  
And God Himself shall compass you about  
With songs of gladness and deliverance.



## VII.

The morning came, but never dawn had brought  
Upon its rosy wings tidings more sweet  
Than those that waited now to bless that home.  
Gently the parents heard them from May's lips,  
While Margaret failed to summon fortitude  
To face her mother's and her father's eye.  
How pale and meagre looked the downcast face !  
For shame, and fear, and hunger had laid siege  
Unto the citadel and seat of life.  
Those three days' fortunes touched with ghastlier hue  
The lilies pining on her pensive cheek ;  
Sorrowful lilies, all bedashed with rains  
That fell in sad drops from the weeping eyes.  
Ah ! Margaret, thou wert foolish, but thou hast  
Youth and the future—hope's chief elements.  
Thou shalt outlive thy sorrow ; and even now  
Half of that bitterness of death is past ;  
Thou shalt yet smile serenely, like the day  
Whose morn was shaken by a thunder-storm.

My mother, like the mountain ash exposed  
To the loud tempest that sweeps overhead,  
Had bowed in sorrow but submissively  
To the fierce blast's inexorable bidding ;  
But as warm sunshine and cool summer dews  
Robe the dashed bush in renovated green,

She shall in measure yet repair her loss :  
But my poor father—blown, alas ! and bent,  
And shattered, like the great tree in its strength,  
Shall ne'er regain his stately stalwartness,  
But carry to his silent grave the scars  
And sad mementoes of that storm of Fate.  
Infirmities are sapping now his strength, .  
His eye is dimming daily, and his locks  
Grow white as daisies on the churchyard sward,  
His resting-place ere many months are o'er ;  
Yet sad, not piteous, a good man's decline.  
The totter of the step once firm and free,  
The palsy of the hand all vigour once,  
The shrunk and toothless face, once fresh and fair,  
The treble of the voice, so manly once,  
The wreck and dissolution of the frame  
Which cannot house the spirit fittingly  
And which then hies it unto other skies :  
All this, even to the Christian himself,  
Though solemn, is not sorrowful. He knows  
That when unclothed, he shall be clothed upon.  
Then totter out, my father, the few moons  
Heaven has appointed for thy longer stay ;  
And when thou hast attained the shores of bliss  
No stranger shalt thou be, nor heaven be strange.  
For with thy God thou wisely hast begun  
Acquaintanceship on earth. God is thy friend ;  
Thy Saviour, bruised for thee, thou knowest well,

His name was ever music to thine ear ;  
Thy hopes all clustered around Jesu's name ;  
Thy longings were to see His gracious face,  
And praise Him better than thou couldst do here,  
In that rejoicing and all-fragrant land  
Where tears and sighing shall have passed away,  
And the rose blossom without wounding thorn :  
The heaven's inhabitants are friendly all ;  
Those spirits who have never lapsed from God,  
And done His errands from eternity ;  
And those, too, who have reached that happy shore,  
Through the dark valley of the shade of death,  
Earth's nearest neighbourhood unto the heavens.  
Bright thus thy prospects, and thou knowest well  
The measure of all things is how they end.  
What though thou wert born lowly, and thou hadst  
To learn contentment on a bit of bread !  
Thou didst not covet what thou didst not miss.  
And now comes Faith's last grand Apocalypse :  
The opened heavens, thy Father reconciled ;  
Thy loving Saviour leading His redeemed ;  
The angels' smile, the dear society  
Of spirits of the just now perfected ;  
The glad, resounding symphonies of heaven ;  
And Life's pure river flowing through amidst  
The golden streets of New Jerusalem.

My brother Oswald, at the sea for long,

My father old and greatly broken down,  
They all besought that I should stay at home  
And manage as I might the little farm.  
So Mark and Lucy journeyed back alone,  
Freighted with loving wishes of us all ;  
For much of that restraint that must have else  
Hung on our intercourse at that dread time  
Was smoothed away like ice before the sun  
By their wise counsel and kind sympathy.

How that old time is graven on my heart,  
With the good precepts and the sage advice  
(Bright with a halo as from unseen worlds)  
Wherewith the dying old man counselled me !  
Our common resting-place, in the short walks  
We had together oft, was 'neath the shade  
Of that thick wood where I found Margaret ;  
And now I give some fragments of his talks.  
"This is a land of shadows. See me here—  
I am no poor man, as I thought myself ;  
I am a King, and waiting for my crown.  
Why then, like children, should we e'er lament  
When comes grim Death, and not untimely plucks  
Earth's fading roses, taking them away  
To bloom, unfading, in the land of bliss ?  
And yet I know that you will grieve for me ;  
The old man, though a trouble, will be missed,  
His empty arm-chair will be text enough

For many a silent tear. Walter, my son,  
Be it thy task to cheer the widow's heart ;  
Be thou a father to the fatherless,  
And see that God's great name be feared by all  
Within my household, when I am no more.  
Be sober in thy thoughts ; and though not dull,  
Go not through life as goes the headlong brook  
With song and dance to the engulphing sea.  
Thou hast a love for books, and books are good,  
And though I shall not live to see the day,  
It may be that thy God shall give thee yet  
Some message of His own to glad men's thoughts ;  
If so, be thankful, and resolve thou wilt  
Make it God's opportunity, not thine.  
Choose ever worthy themes ; themes such as thou  
May'st look upon with pleasure and with hope  
When thy hair whitens, and thy hand, like mine,  
Is grateful for the succour of a staff.  
My son, be thou a humble, praying man.  
Herein is man dissevered from the brutes ;  
They all can *feel*, and some not meanly *think* ;  
But it is man's prerogative to pray.  
O waft thee often on the wing of prayer  
Into that Presence where no thoughts dare come  
That are not meek, and just, and virtuous ;  
Nourish thy soul on the recorded Word  
Of Him who is Almighty ; for without  
This exercise and buttress, thy best faith

Will stoop its soaring, and will fall and die  
As the bird falleth on its broken wing.  
My hour is come, but thine is coming too.  
Think nothing great, or worthy, or august,  
That looks not so when Death's pale shadow falls  
And palls it with its awful sombreness.  
I would not sadden thee, for thou art young ;  
Yet put not from thee frequent thought of death ;  
The thought that solemnises still exalts.  
What is this life of thine ? ask oft, and let  
The death-watch ticking in thy breast reply."  
Man's life is earnest, but how earnest is  
The eloquence that speaks from dying lips !  
I deeply drank its spirit, and if now  
I seek to bind sobriety of thought  
Among the flowerets which my hand can reach  
In Poesy's fair realm, it is that I  
Have learned obedience to a good man's will.

And so the time passed by, each weary month  
Stealing some remnant of a grace or strength  
From the frail body or the manly face.  
I well remember that slow-pacing time ;  
And how the earth around me took the hue  
And caught the feelings of my darkened mind.  
The dewdrops of the morning were no more  
The precious diamonds wherewith secret Night  
Bedecks the green leaves and the gladsome flowers.

I rather thought, reflecting on the woe  
Time, as he passes, bringeth to the heart,  
That he must sometimes curse his cruel scythe  
Which lays so desolate else-hopeful hours,  
And that the dewdrops are the tears he sheds  
Over the sheaves of sorrow he has reaped.  
The woodland birds trilled no blithe roundelay,  
But taught their joyousness a sober note ;  
And as I bent and looked into the flowers  
Which seemed to me to image back my grief,  
I loved them better than in blissful hours.  
And yet I knew, even when I fancied thus,  
That Nature paceth onward with calm step,  
Knowing no sorrow at her passive breast,  
Nor sympathizing with man's joy or woe,  
And heedless whether he may waste or use  
The fleeting moments, bringing life or death.

It was late Autumn of the mellow year  
When his poor life slow-flickered to its end ;  
And although plenty had enriched our barn,  
Some disenchanting, melancholy thing  
Sat mocking at our dismal harvest-home,  
Blinding gay laughter with its own dull tear,  
And thrusting through all jollity with sighs.

I see us standing round the weary bed,  
Watching the dim eye dimming with the shades

That herald in the everlasting Night.  
I hear the last farewell ; he took the hand  
Of my poor mother, who sobbed out her grief ;  
They mingled their sad tears, and then he said :  
“ Farewell, my Mary, we shall meet again.”  
And then the hand of each of us he took,  
And with the pathos of a mournful grasp,  
A loving-mournful and a lingering grasp,  
He took a mute farewell, and then prepared  
To take his journey whither it might lead.  
His breath is past, and we no longer see  
A loving father, but a father’s dust ;  
His work is over, and he resteth now.  
Ah, although few will live a good man’s life,  
Yet all would wish to die a good man’s death ;  
For in the darkness of that solemn hour  
He only with Faith’s strong, enkindled eye  
Sees in pale Death a messenger of love,  
Not cutting down with fell, remorseless hand,  
But grafting kindly into higher life.

Both Mark and Lucy hastened back again,  
And with their presence cheered our house of woe.  
On the third day from that on which the soul  
Fled its clay dwelling-place we sadly bore  
The body to the grave—  
The mould was shovelled in upon the dead,  
And dead leaves with it. Rest in peace, the dead,



Rest for a little ; soon we all shall claim  
Our resting-place in silence by thy side.  
That day I sought the converse of my heart,  
And I sought heaven, the refuge of the sad  
And weary-hearted since the sky was blue ;  
For there the King of all the earth doth sit,  
Who makes kings tremble on their thrones, and stays  
The sobbing of the orphan. I sought Him,  
The great upbinder of the bruised heart ;  
That heavenly visitant who in his love  
“ Brought life and immortality to light ” ;  
Mercy’s sweet words, which should be writ as if  
In glorious sunbeams on each Christian’s grave ;  
Which flash their blest imperishable light  
Upon the hopeless eye, and gently turn  
The rustling of the grass upon the graves  
Into mysterious melody for aye.

O immortality, thou light of life,  
Thou music in the discords of the earth,  
Thou sittest in thy far serenity,  
And with thine own bright face interpretest  
The woes and mysteries of mortal life !  
Had we ne’er known thee, never seen thy face,  
Ne’er heard the melody of thy sweet voice,  
Ne’er followed thee in thought to that bright land  
Where still thou strayest among fadeless flowers ;  
When our frail being melted like a dream

We might have taught our souls severe content  
To make the Darkness pillow for our heads ;  
Severe content in that last dismal hour  
Around our cold and silent couch to draw  
The pall and curtain of eternal Night.  
But well we know thee ; we have seen thy star,  
Thy bright star, in the east, and we are come  
To worship Him, Most High, of whom thou art  
But an expression and an attribute.  
Blest immortality, thou friend of man,  
Hope of his heart, and vigour of his arm,  
We cannot want from our benighted earth  
The blest refulgence of thy sacred light ;  
We cannot lose thy suretyship of joys  
That throw a splendour on the universe,  
The joys that flush the rapt believer's cheek  
And o'er-compensate all earth's miseries.  
We carry with us to the grave this faith  
Whose quenching were the plucking of the sun  
From life's blue firmament. Shine on, O sun,  
And with thy lustre gild the tears of earth.  
My father, can I think thee dead for aye,  
Thy life some spilt or broken thing, which no  
Blest resurrection shall yet gather up ?  
Wert thou my father yesterday, and is  
Dust of the valley now thine only name ?  
Ah, no such vain philosophy be mine ;  
The bitter cup which ministers new health,

Or brings back blessèd hope, a man may drink ;  
But not the cup whose bitterness is death,  
And hopelessness, and night without a dawn,  
Night whence the stars flee shuddering away.  
But 'tis enough ; with God's blest promises,  
As with an angel's wing, I brush away  
All this unhallowed gloom ; and now I see  
The sun of righteousness arise in strength  
Circling through time and through eternity ;  
That sun of righteousness whose beams shall reach  
The slumberers in the tomb with rousing ray  
When they have slept enough ; and they shall rise  
To meet the Lord triumphant in the air.  
O mighty grave, where now thy victory ?  
Death, the all-terrible to sons of men,  
Thou now art dead, struck through with thine own dart ;  
Faith, bind thy wounds up, for the fight is o'er,  
Robe thee in fair apparel of the sky,  
For thou hast conquered, and now comes thy rest.

## VIII.

Thus, as the sorrow-cloud passed over me, I had  
Sweet Hope for my companion, and when now  
I had emerged from out its sullen gloom  
I sought, as wisely as I might, to find  
Instruction in the darksome discipline.

The chief effect it wrought in me was this :  
The world past death did not seem now afar,  
But lost its strangeness and its awfulness,  
And came and mingled in my common thoughts.  
“My father, thou art there !” thus thought I oft ;  
And, often pondered, that dim land became  
Inwoven in the texture of my mind ;  
Yea, was a friendly and a cordial thing,  
And welcome, like a dear familiar face.  
How distant, yet how near, are the two worlds !  
The mortal breathing world, and that which sleeps  
In its own silence, never broken yet.  
The slight partition of a little breath,  
Which death breaks down, makes bar impassable,  
And farthest limit unto flesh and blood ;  
But long ere we have reached the bourne of death,  
Our subtle spirit the vain barrier leaps  
And sits and communes in a dream divine  
With spirits of our friends of long ago ;  
And what the spirit dreams becomes to it  
A sacred treasure and reality.  
These thoughts brought staid sobriety, not gloom,  
And I ne’er grudged them refuge in my heart,  
Or put them from me, for I thought them good.

Mark, who on our bereavement hastened here,  
Stayed with considerate kindness a few days,  
And oft with him I trod the lonely glen,

Shedding its leafy honours, or the moor,  
Sprinkled with bleaters. In these solitudes  
We told our feelings, and desires, and hopes,  
And comforted each other with the things  
That take no shadow from the ills of life,  
But shine for ever, like untroubled stars.  
He told me of the battle of his life ;  
Not daily toiling, for that comes to most,  
But his especial battle ; when he went  
Into the home of brutish ignorance,  
And talked of duty and the love of God,  
To hear his solemn words tossed with an oath  
Of fiendish laughter, or of scorn, away.  
“Nor is this wonderful,” he said, while lay  
A massive thoughtfulness upon his face ;  
“For few will seek the wretched, and the vile :  
Not from hard-heartedness, but sloth of heart,  
Or from an inability to see  
How this hell-legion may be dispossessed,  
And those poor prodigals reclaimed to good.  
They tell me sometimes, as to solve their woe,  
That they were *made* to mourn ; but well I see  
In the wild flashing of their angry eyes  
The soul’s proud protest that it is not so,  
And to injustice somewhere that they trace  
Their degradation and their misery.  
And those fierce flashes of their discontent  
Bring me a chastened joy, as proof that man

Was made for happiness, since he resents  
Innately thus the gloomy opposite  
As an injustice, and a mockery.  
Though all seems quiet, all is not at rest.  
We know how that the unsuspected hill  
Nurses the young volcano in its breast ;  
And while the landscape smileth and is glad,  
A cauldron of destruction boils beneath.  
There are fierce spirits loose upon the earth,  
Broke from the dens of ignorance and sin :  
This task, O world, remaineth unto thee,  
To seize and tame them. Wilt thou take them, then,  
And meet their fury with a hate as blind,  
And cage them in the dungeon of despair,  
Again to burst forth with avenging swoop,  
Drunk with mad frenzy, terrible as fiends ?  
Or wilt thou rather charm the Fury down,  
By gently wooing at its rugged breast,  
With just and kindly deeds that find their way  
To what is yet of human in the heart,  
Awaking there old memories of things  
Deemed dead for ever, brightening the earth  
With new-found happiness and new-found hope ?  
Here, then, is thy alternative, O world ;  
See that thy choice be prudent." Here he ceased,  
But soon continued thus the darksome theme  
That lay so near to his unselfish heart :  
"Nor in the eye of wisdom need the choice

Be difficult or dubious ; for Love,  
Blest Love, alone can solve the mystery  
And the dread problem of the crowded lanes.  
I found a woman, helpless, worn, and wild,  
Her child upon her knee, at her low fire,  
That gave no light, and needed all its heat  
To feed its own frail life. I tried to find  
By what wise avenue I best could gain  
A passage to the heart. I took her child,  
And asked her if its trusting, gladsome smile  
Cast *no* blest light on her benighted earth ?  
I told her that, all poor and destitute,  
The God-man Jesus was bereaved as she,  
A homeless, cheerless wanderer on earth ;  
I told her how His grievèd eye was wet  
With tears of sweetest love, that sought man's good  
And mourned his sinfulness, until at length,  
As in despair at man's ingratitude,  
He broke His heart o'er old Jerusalem ;  
I told her of the bright and tearless land  
Which He had purchased, and would give to all  
Who, heavy-laden, come to Him for rest,  
And that her sorrows, and her pains would be  
Sweet-lightened by His love. Her heart seemed touched.  
I saw her oft ; and from that happy day  
I tasted somewhat of the blessedness  
Which God drops down upon the head of him  
Who turns a sinner unto righteousness.

Oh ! if the Churches would forego their strifes,  
And let no more the arches of the great  
And glorious temple of pure peace and love  
Ring with the war-whoop of a mean revenge,  
And feud, and envy, and traducing words ;  
But leagued together in one brother-band,  
And led by the great Captain in the heavens,  
Would march with flying banners of the truth,  
And to the music that glads Zion hill,  
Against the strongholds of the enemy :  
This were a warfare worthy of her arms.  
O, 'tis the arch-trick of the Fiend to cause  
Division 'mong the one God's worshippers,  
And it is devilish joy to him to see  
Fraternal swords crossed thus in bitter hate ;  
But these things are unseemly, and must cease."  
He paused a space, as if with heart too full,  
Then with a sigh he recommenced his theme :  
"Sometimes my mind is almost overborne  
With thoughts that sadden and disquiet me ;  
But unto you heaven gives another task ;  
Another and an easier. You have  
Here, 'mong your hills, no frightful, crowded dens  
Where Vice glares at you with malignant eyes,  
And is suspicious of your best intents ;  
Where Hunger and low Ignorance combine  
Their ruthless tyrannies to bind the soul  
Unto the seen, and sensual, and vile ;



But here your task is (if it be a task)  
To woo your furrows to a plentier yield,  
To teach your acres how to busk themselves  
With pleasant fruitage of the mellow year,  
To wander through the sunshine, and to think  
That it is God's sweet mercy that doth warm  
The sunbeam sloping on His dear-loved earth.  
And even although, as it will chance, you have  
To battle with the seasons, and maintain  
A controversy oft with wind and shower,  
The little forethought needed to success  
Is in itself a pleasure. Well I know  
That grief and trial are God's mystery,  
And fall down like the dew all secretly  
On dwellers here as in the peopled towns ;  
But I know likewise that the dwellers here  
(Known to you all, and pitied by you all  
When trouble overtakes them) lay their hearts  
Far barer unto mercy's healing hand,  
And render it more easy thus to make  
The tear of sorrow as it forms and falls  
Beam with the promise of a brighter day.  
I almost envy you your peaceful life  
And opportunities of doing good  
Among these quiet scenes. To bind the heart,  
To dry the bitter and bereavèd tear,  
To teach the ignorant fair wisdom's way,  
To seek high heaven yourself with purer eye

When seeking it with those you comforted,  
And so to grow old, ever doing good—  
Be this your life, and to this life be true,  
And when the mystery of Providence  
Casts a dull shadow on your own hearthstone,  
I need not bid you then to call to mind  
That sorrow is not master on the earth,  
And that with patience, chastisement shall pass  
And all things work together for your good.”  
“And you return,” I then said with a glow  
Of admiration flushing at my heart,  
“To go through lanes unvisited of Hope.”  
“Yes, thither go I,” the brave Mark replied,  
“My life devote I to the roughsome work,  
Which has its pleasures, tender and not few ;  
For something whispers in my heart and says  
That this is what has been appointed me  
As my chief portion underneath the sun,  
To fight the fierce wild beasts of Ephesus.”  
He finished with a quiet cheery smile.  
Farewell, dear Mark, here we shake hands and part.  
Thou noble soul, no more upon my page  
Shall thy name brighten as I look at it,  
For now my task is growing to an end.  
God’s hero, thou hast often led the way  
To deeds of high and heavenly enterprise ;  
And as I meditate the saintliness  
Of all thy life, thou seemest to mine eye

As Priest and Legate of the Holy One  
With Urim and with Thummim on thy breast ;  
And as thou partest from my page, I deem  
The angel not unworthily employed  
Who registers the tenor of thy life  
In the recording volume of the skies.

Let many days pass unrecorded here ;  
Days pleasant to the eye of memory  
And bright with reflex of some moral effort.  
I only say I tried to shape my life  
As faithfully as busy time allowed  
To Mark's high prototype. Besides such work  
(Which I regarded with the chiefest eye)  
I gathered oft, as I found thoughts and time,  
Into our barn, which served as lecture-hall,  
As many of the dwellers round about  
As cared to come, and there I spake to them  
With what of eloquence and moving power  
An earnest purpose and research could give,  
Of the great marvels of the earth and sky,  
And of the mortal history of man.  
Yet ever in my narrative of these  
I studiously heeded to let fall  
The sober shadow of eternal things.  
Their wonted sphere of thought I strove to widen,  
And by awaking unused faculties  
To charm them onward unto higher steeps

Where Knowledge sitteth with her wreath of joy  
To bind the lofty and adventurous head.  
And let no man despise these humble ones ;  
Not few of them had minds, which, trained aright  
By Study's careful hand, had shone with gleam  
Of no contemned lustre. Minds untrained  
Are like the channel of the mill-race, oft,  
Empty, the water being sluiced away ;  
But let the stream in, and it soon will set  
The mighty mill in motion ; so with man :  
Let in the stream of knowledge to fill up  
The vacant channel of his untaught mind,  
And new-born thoughts harmoniously will move  
The subtle, complex mind's machinery.  
I found it so ; some had an aptitude  
Innate and wonderful for abstract themes,  
And conned old books and pondered till at last  
They put in peril my supremacy.  
And I rejoiced to see them growing thus  
In knowledge of the many things that give  
A charm and solace to man's earthly life,  
Nor overlooking the majestic truths  
Which constitute the soul's high nutriment,  
Of which partaking they shall never die.

In most of this, good Andrew took a part,  
Devoted, wise in wisdom that becomes  
Man's gray hairs best, making them reverent,

Touched with the shadow that unseen doth fall  
Around his later years, and heightens them  
To something more divine. And Andrew said  
His daily bread was sweeter to him now  
Since it was seasoned with some work for good,  
Ere Death should come and blow his candle out.  
Thus lived he 'mong the hills his useful life,  
A life unknown, untrumpeted on earth.

## IX.

Again I throw a gap of many days  
Into this history, which I design  
As record merely of such salient points  
As stand, outjutting, in my memory,  
And which have shaped or influenced my life.  
The plundering years, as they sped o'er us, spared  
Our happy home, yea, added to its joy,  
And blest our garnerers with prosperity ;  
Till now at length a shade fell on its peace,  
A saddening shade, though with a phase of joy.  
It lost both sisters on the self-same night,  
By marriage, not by death ; and I indeed  
Lost thus much sunshine from my home, and some  
From out my being ; and we lost them thus :  
One night returning from my harvest fields  
Fatigued but joyous o'er a busy day,

I found two neighbour yeomen in our home,  
One holding May's, the other Margaret's hand.  
Each pled for my approval and consent  
To marry her whose hand lay in his own.  
The sisters, with their cheeks aglow with sense  
Of mild confusion and a touch of shame,  
Bent each her head, down-drooping like the rose  
When it is weighted with the drops of night.  
I said I feared it would quite ruin me  
To tocher suitably two brides at once,  
And as they did deserve ; and then we stood  
In silence for a moment, till each rose  
Lifted its down-drooped head. The one rose said :  
" Dear Walter, may I ? " and the other said :  
" May I, dear Walter ? " What could Walter do ?  
As if twin roses growing on one stem,  
Which you had loved and fondled in your hand  
As they were living and could know your love,  
Should be strange-gifted with a tongue and speech,  
And ask your hand to pluck them from their stalk  
And place them, blooming, on some breast they loved,  
Could you refuse them, though you long might miss  
Some charm from the old walk ? No more could I  
Gainsay an argument so sweetly pled ;  
And gave my best approval and consent  
To the betrothals of that happy night.  
I knew my father, were he living then,  
Would have approved the choice ; and in his place

I formally thus ratified and sealed  
The high engagements then concluded on.

Each of my sisters pressed my mother oft  
To make abode with her in her new home,  
Praising the house and beauty of the scene ;  
But all availed not : the good woman thought  
There was not such a spot on earth again  
As Gowanbrae ; no hills sublime as those  
That reared around us their majestic heads ;  
No meadows verdant as our own, on which  
She watched the harvests ripen half her days ;  
No gowans such as greeted there her eye  
E'er spread their bosoms to the south wind's breath ;  
Nor was there such a pleasant bit of sea  
As that which stretched in prospect from our house,  
Search the wide kingdom through from shore to shore.  
No, no ; she knew their wooers were good men ;  
Good men, and kind and thrifty ; still she said,  
" They werena Watty " : she would stay with me.  
And so thou shalt, good mother ; thy grey hairs  
Shall have a snug retreat and honoured place  
Beside my hearth, until thy time is come  
(Or mine, it may be) to bid earth good-bye,  
And seek the covert where all sleep so sound.

The night before the wedding came a knock,  
Hearty and sudden, at our outer door ;

At the brave summons I went out and found  
My scarce-known brother Oswald, with a grin  
Of rich good-humour wrinkling all his face.  
Soon were the nimble sisters at the door,  
And weeping on his neck with might and main,  
All unlike brides upon their wedding eve.  
The gay tarpaulin shook himself at length  
From their embraces, and ran, wistful, in,  
And took his mother by both hands at once,  
And asked if she remembered Osie still ?  
She clasped him to her breast, although her joy  
Took sorrow's guise, and looked at him through tears.  
The sailor kissed them off, and in his own  
Bright eye a teardrop glittered. "Mother, oft,"  
He said, or rather, half-ashamed, he sobbed,  
"When the fierce, deafening hurricanes would sweep  
Upon our little bark, I thought of thee.  
I saw thee sitting, thinking of thy boy,  
And with a prayer ensheltering his head  
In the tumultuous weather. Home at last,  
Home to his mother comes her wandering son."  
With his great hand he gave his eye a brush,  
And turning round, as if to change the theme,  
He saw old Benjie, who came bustling in,  
Delighted with the hubbub of the time.  
Glad was the recognition of the two,  
And pleasant was our evening round the fire.  
Amazed was Oswald (Captain Oswald Bruce



For many years now) at the tale he heard  
Of our two marriages a few hours off ;  
While in the Captain Benjie's eye espied  
A suitable companion, jovial, free,  
Rich-freighted with the wonders he had seen  
In every nook and corner of the earth ;  
And when he took his farewell for the night,  
He smilingly expressed a hope that he,  
The Captain, would endeavour to heed now  
The lessons he had slighted so of yore,  
And that he would, as far as in him lay,  
Mind "the discretions" on the coming day.

Two years are gone : a wife is at my side,  
A monitor and friend whose love-filled eyes  
Are witchery to me, and whose soft words  
Break on my ear in silver ; spirit meek,  
And beautiful as sunshine when it hangs  
Around the young Spring's neck, and kisses all  
Her waiting buds to being ; good and fair,  
Fair as a rose, and Rosa is her name.  
Spirit serene and pure, that thinks no harm,  
And loves all gentle things : the sportive lamb  
That gambols round its dam ; the humming bee  
That, patient, wrestles in the deep flower-bells,  
Mindful, even then, of winter ; gladsome birds  
That pay their tribute to the summer sun  
In sweet songs every day ; gay childhood's smile,

The waving woods, the innocence of flowers  
That teach man virtue, but upbraid him not ;  
The sunset hour in the transfigured west,  
The marching stars, the awe and hush of night.  
But the sweet face comes peering o'er my page  
And, smiling, pointeth upward, as to say :  
"These things, though beautiful, are not the best.  
The virtuous wreath wherewith to deck *her* brows,  
Must be all fragrant with immortal flowers,  
Not hung with beauties of the chilly earth  
That droop and perish." Blessings on the tongue  
That sheds the music of sweet, hopeful words  
Upon her partner's ear—sweet, hopeful words  
To do his duty and be brave of heart ;  
To covet nothing but the glad "well done"  
Of the great Reckoning-day ; to plant the rose  
In life's vast wilderness ; to teach the faith  
(The faith our mothers rocked our cradles in)  
That God is love, and that He loves poor man—  
Poor man, the wanderer ; and that Jesus wept  
Beside the grave of Lazarus in love.

So ends my story : many quiet nights  
Have brought me leisure for this pleasing task ;  
'Tis finished—yet I linger o'er the end  
Touched into pensiveness, and hope, and joy :  
Here sit I, musing o'er my closing page  
And meditate my work, in which I strove

{Arraying Poesy in saintlier robe  
Than she is wont to wear as she trips o'er  
The pleasant fields of earth) to touch my heart,  
And hearts perchance of others, with those things  
That still confront us with an earnest face,  
And whose solution needs the breath of heaven.  
It saddens me to think that men who could  
Throw a broad grandeur and rich flush of thought,  
The poet's ardour and the poet's grace  
On themes the Christian ponders in his heart,  
Should touch so sparingly the mighty themes  
On which to meditate transfigures life,  
And among which all men should teach their thoughts  
To wander as at home.

To feel the cheek  
Brushed by the zephyr in the heat of noon ;  
To see the flowers put on their peaceful robes  
And feel their odours flung about your steps  
As if they blessed you as you pass them by ;  
To hear the ripple of the woodland brook  
That strangely babbles, as you list its voice,  
Contentment to the heart ; the pleasant earth  
That looks up to the sun, and thankful smiles  
From quiet valleys which love nestles in,  
And where gay childhood gambols ; the soft flush  
Of evening as she sobers into night ;  
The moonrise, filling with a gentle ray  
The sleeping landscape, peaceful as a dream ;

The gleaming of the stars—all this is sweet,  
And serves the Poet as his dearest theme.  
Yet, half of its enchantment unto me  
Derives its being from the joyous thought  
That all earth's beauty is the loving gift  
Of Him who spread the heavens above my head  
And lit the fires of the firmament.  
Nature, I love thee, I have blest thy face  
And praised thy beauty with no niggard tongue ;  
Yet, whether God does love me, never yet  
Could nature tell me when she smiled her best.  
Ah, what is man to Him—the unknown God,  
Far hidden in His own eternity,  
Or hymned by concord of immortal lips ?  
Ah, what is man to Him—unhappy man  
In this small planet of the universe,  
His petty joys, his sorrows, and his cares ?  
I look up at the heavens, but they are far,  
And cold, and silent ; I look all abroad  
Upon the earth, but the green earth is dumb  
Unto my questioning ; I ask my heart,  
My heart can weep, but cannot answer me ;  
I search the written Word—the Lamp of earth  
Which some would fain extinguish—and get there  
This answer as in sunbeams : “ Man is much,  
Ah, very much to God, who could not let  
Man perish when he had destroyed himself,  
But sent in inextinguishable love

His reconciling Daysman unto earth  
To lay His hand upon His brother-man  
And woo him back to God, in which blest work  
He ate the bread of sorrow through long years,  
Despised or hated by a phrenzied world,  
Misunderstood by friend and foe alike,  
Until in agony and bloody sweat  
He gathered in His undespairing heart  
The nameless horror of Gethsemane,  
And stretched Himself, Heaven's bleeding sacrifice,  
Upon the Cross, redeeming with His blood  
The fallen sons of Adam, fallen all,  
The mightiest and meanest." Thus the Book  
Rejected and despised so oft, as was  
Its Giver on the earth, alone sheds down  
The peace of immortality and love  
Upon the unrest of the troubled heart,  
And brings us back the too-forgotten faith  
Of the eternal unity of men,  
Prince, peer, and peasant, in the eye of God,  
And in the eye of justice. Thou who read'st  
These pages, all now ended, know that all  
Upon the earth are brothers, that one blood  
Circles in human veins, and that the rags  
Which squalor shivers in, bar not the name  
Nor break the tie of kindred. Knowing this,  
And knowing faith must blossom into deeds,  
Be thy hand busy doing Mercy's work ;

Cheering the wretched, soothing the distressed,  
Teaching the erring, making all thy life  
A parable of goodness ; and thou shalt  
Receive thy recompense from God's own hand  
At joyous resurrection of the Just.





**MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.**





## MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

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### CONTINUITY.

OUR lives are formed from silent day to day ;  
The Present is the product of the Past ;  
And all the moments since the primal ray  
Were kinsmen of the moment that was last,  
And hewed and shaped the moment ev'n now cast  
A wingèd spirit from time's pendulum.  
Dread Past ! there is no death for thee ; thou hast  
An immortality though all so dumb ;  
Thou livest in the *Now* through ages all to come.

For nothing dies, and least of all the Past ;  
Unseen it rocked the cradle of To-day,  
Time's latest nursling, latest but not last !  
To-day unknowing kneads To-morrow's clay ;  
To-morrow, its To-morrow ; so alway  
The close-linked moments build Eternity ;  
And we have each some potency and sway  
In fashioning the wondrous Yet-to-be ;  
More than an angel's might thy God, O man, gives thee.

## NATURE.

How dear is Nature in her garments green !  
Is there a soul that all unmoved hath seen  
Her beauty and her mystery ? For him  
Delightful Nature mantles to the brim  
No love-encircled and delicious cup,  
Which for her votaries she hoardeth up  
In leafy valley or in mountain glen.  
How I have longed among the haunts of men  
To hear the streamlet's murmur, and to know  
The soothingness and rapture that outflow  
From the winds' bluster ! O ! thrice-envied lot  
To be the dweller in a rural cot  
O'erspread by summer's finger to the eaves  
With gladsome roses and with freshest leaves ;  
To sit and bask me in the sunny beam  
As earth were Eden, and all life a dream ;  
To hear the tuneful birds around me sing,  
Or viewless skylarks on delighted wing ;  
To read in every floweret's dewy eye,  
As in a text, a message from the sky ;  
To yield a willing spirit to the rush  
Of many-coloured feelings 'mid the hush  
Of moor or upland ; then to hie me home  
Blither than bee unto its honeycomb.  
How sweet were such a life ! not solely spent  
In idle or luxurious content,

But with an earnest purpose oft to wend  
And mingle sighs with him that knows no friend ;  
To make lone sorrow smile, to teach despair  
To turn his groan into believing prayer.  
Shall such lot e'er be mine ? How doubly sweet  
Were such a life spent in such loved retreat,  
To taste life's daily good, and understand  
That all is furnished from a Father's hand ;  
To feel the breezes scatter health abroad,  
The sunshine glowing with the love of God.

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## TO A MOORLAND FLOWER.

LONE floweret, smiling at my feet,  
With countenance so sweet,  
Lifting thy chalice to my view,  
Bathed in the morn's fresh dew ;  
Beholding thee with loving eye,  
There come to me, I scarce know why,  
A trouble and a sigh.

Belovèd flower, thou knowest not,  
Within this peaceful spot,  
The canker and the fretful strife  
Of man's unquiet life ;  
Nor hast thou felt the pain that wrings  
The heart tormented by the stings  
Of unachievèd things.

No rudest wind that blows can dart  
A sorrow to thy heart ;  
Thou hast no neighbourhood nor kin  
With grief, or care, or sin ;  
But here, 'mid Nature's healthful balm,  
There gathers on thy face the calm  
Of her perpetual psalm.

Though lonely here, I can descry  
No sadness in thine eye ;  
Alone, but all content to breathe  
The freshness of the heath ;  
Thy sole companionship I see  
The plover and the wandering bee—  
Few, but enough for thee.

How sweet it were, thou little flower,  
Beloved by sun and shower,  
To share the peacefulness that plays  
Around thy sunny days !  
And sweeter were it to behold  
The nurse-like evening come to fold  
Thy bosom from the cold.

Lone flower, although thou charm'st me so,  
Thy name I do not know ;  
I know but this, that at my feet  
There smiles a floweret sweet,

Whose lot it is to meekly shine,  
Never to sorrow or repine ;  
How different is mine !

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## SABBATH MORNING AT LUSS.

OLD friends of mine, ye silent Bens, I come  
Once more to gather health around your feet,  
And happy thoughts and unrepenting joys.  
Is it a dream that when the primal curse  
Smote o'er the earth, it spared this lovely nook,  
And Eden in her beauty lingers here ?  
Fair Luss, thou sleeping beauty of the hills,  
The mountains love thee, and thou lovest them,  
And I, too, love thee, garlanded and gay  
With roses fair, and fairer innocence.

This Sabbath morning, in thy quiet glen,  
For evermore shall summer in my heart.  
A day for adoration. The glad sun,  
Climbing to noonday, spake this word to me :  
" 'Twas God that sent me with my lamp to wake  
The earth this day to worship ; praise thou God."  
Ben Dhu was as an altar, whence the mist  
Uprose like incense with its silent praise ;  
The birch-clad river, ceaseless traveller,  
Who kissed the moorland floweret on his way,

And leapt down gorges, laughing as he leapt,  
Murmured faint praises from his sunken bed ;  
The wild flowers told me parables of peace  
And calm contentment learned among the hills ;  
The bees and humbler kinsfolk on the wing  
Were busy at their never-ending hymn.  
From Tom-na-glas I looked upon the lake  
With all its fairy islands, as they slept  
In sunshine and enchantment and delight ;  
I gazed in silent rapture till the scene  
Grew to a temple, I the worshipper,  
With heart defiled, and weary of itself ;  
But where the lamb for a burnt-offering ?  
This, too, had God provided ; for behold  
Caught in the thicket of that love of His,  
Immeasurable as vast Eternity,  
There stood the mute and meek-eyed Lamb of God,  
Mankind's great sacrifice and suretyship.  
And as I mused there came this still small voice :  
"The Lamb was slain for thee ; rejoice, O man ;  
Thou shalt not die in thine iniquity."

A scene most strange—a splendour and a joy,  
A vision holy and astir with God.  
I stood adoring, and the breeze did seem  
The rustle of God's garment as He passed.

AILSA CRAIG.

LONE Ailsa, crag of mystery and awe,  
 Come tell me stories of Eternity !  
 Methinks the Almighty Maker, when He sowed  
 His universe with worlds, let thee fall,  
 A tiny seedling from His plenteous lap,  
 A wonderment for ever in mid-sea.  
 Tell me thy feeling when thou first didst wake  
 Into existence, when the morning stars  
 Shouted their joyaunce in thine infant ear :  
 Or what thy thought when, on the primal morn,  
 The sun peer'd o'er the shoulder of the earth  
 On his first journey, with his robes aflame  
 From the Creator's hand ! Didst thou not think  
 The rising orb was God, and bowedst thy head  
 Before the thing of glory as it passed,  
 And standest as in mute amazement still ?  
 Dost thou remember when earth's earliest tide  
 Shuddered its coldness to thy startled heart ?  
 Dread creature, thou art dumb, or wilt not speak !  
 Thy thoughts are ever far, primeval, dim.  
 The creeping centuries are nought to thee,  
 Or passing dialects of mortal man.  
 Here stood'st thou when the cherub's guardful sword  
 Flamed o'er the portal of lost Paradise.  
 Thou saw'st the darkness of that day of doom,  
 When the rude soldier pierced the Christ's dear side



Amid the angels' sobbing. The wide gulf  
From Marathon to fateful Waterloo  
Is unto thee but as a moon's short round,  
Or the brief blooming of a summer flower.  
Playmate of old Eternity art thou :  
Companion of the tempests and the floods  
That leap around in thunder. Yet, lone Rock,  
A ministry of mercy is thine too :  
Some heaths and wild flowers bloom about thy feet ;  
Throughout the ages countless myriads  
Of longing seabirds hie to thee as home ;  
And in these later days, when evening falls,  
Thou hold'st thy candle in thy hoary hand  
To light the sailor o'er the trackless sea.

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NICK O' THE BALLOCH.

THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN PASS IN AYRSHIRE :

LINES SUGGESTED ON A VISIT TO IT.

WHAT hills and vales and torrent scaurs are these ?  
These are the Ayrshire Highlands, if you please ;  
Those green-clad mountains and those gorges grand ;  
Are there much nobler in all Scotia's land ?  
Ye hills, I love you, and the darksome glen,  
The home and haunt of persecuted men.  
Immortal Freedom, daughter of the skies,  
With fears and hopes contending in her eyes,

Unpitied fugitive in every weather,  
Retreats to the unconquerable heather ;  
Where undespairing she will never cease  
Her sacred warfare, scorning thought of peace  
Until her arm its destined work has done,  
And Freedom's battle has been fought and won.  
With pride, ye Scotchmen, with just pride look round ;  
This is no moorland, this is holy ground !  
Behold these mountains, and these mosses mirk,  
These were the dauntless Covenanters' kirk !  
Here let us worship ; let our souls expand  
Within this Temple built by God's own hand ;  
Here mingled often with the moorland balm  
The holy breath of the ascending psalm !  
The sore-spent worshippers found here at length  
The Lord of Hosts, their refuge and their strength.  
Let's honour men who dared their king withstand,  
Those lowly heroes of our native land ;  
Let's lend to men who never would be slaves  
The lustre of imperishable graves.  
These are not Mountains ; they are Altars, these,  
Whence ceaseless incense rises on the breeze.

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TO-MORROW.

To-MORROW smiles to me in sweet array,  
As bright and stainless as untrodden snow ;  
But when To-morrow shall be Yesterday,  
How foul and trampled shall its whiteness show !

SONNETS: CROSSRAGUEL<sup>1</sup> ABBEY.

## I.

CROSSRAGUEL, sitting like a King dethroned,  
His sceptre trailing in the heedless dust,  
His proud arm broken, and his sword all rust,  
Here stand I while the breezes, many-toned,  
Pipe through the roofless walls as if they moaned  
The unregarded story of thy fate ;  
Thy halls, once crowded, now how desolate !  
For centuries wide territories owned  
The magic of thy name, how powerless now !  
The passing peasant, with a careless brow,  
Pays thee no reverence as he trills aloud  
Love-ditties at thy shrine ; lone cloister, thou  
Ne'er thought'st thy day would sink in western cloud :  
Time spared thee long, but brought at length thy shroud.

## II.

The passing moments, like to falling leaves,  
Have buried thee from living thoughts of men ;  
Thy belfry silent, ne'er to sound again  
In silver drops of harmony that cleaves  
The happy air in blessing. No heart grieves,  
And none rejoices, o'er thy ruined fane ;  
Eternity hath bound thee with his chain  
Remorseless, silent, while the grass slow weaves

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced Cross-ray'-gle.

Its mantle of forgetfulness for thee.  
Men say in other days thy walls did see  
Deeds treacherous and vile, and that thy rod  
Was red with frequent blood : such well may be.  
And yet I deem some saintly souls here trod,  
Like meek À Kempis, walking with their God.

## III.

Thou and thy doings are all passed away,  
And gone to judgment, whether good or ill !  
Thou sittest like a ghost, so weird, so still ;  
The ghost of thy old self, lone-brooding, grey.  
I well remember in my life's young day,  
Thy walls seemed to my fancy wrinkled o'er  
With spectral legends full of goblin lore,  
And things unearthly which young hearts dismay ;  
And now, although no idle ghost I fear,  
Death, through thy lips, hath counsel for mine ear.  
No voice so loud as Death's, altho' it be  
He speak but in a whisper ; hark, I hear  
His muffled footsteps stealing on to me  
Like far-off thunder of Eternity !

## IV.

Eternity, the Future's awful name,  
Shall gather up each fragment of the Past  
Into her bosom, all-embracing, vast,  
So that no spark of the heaven-kindled flame

Of human life, no being that could claim  
Kindred with spirit, shall be quenched for aye.  
And so I deem that there shall come a day  
(When Doom's dread fires have repurged the frame  
Of this corrupted earth) that I shall meet  
The sleeping tenants of this lone retreat.  
I count them as my kindred, though the sod  
Hath pillowed them for ages, since their feet  
In other years these self-same fields have trod,  
And all are kinsmen in the heart of God.

## V.

Thus on a bridge of thought I pass to those  
Who lived and died long centuries ago ;  
I see the Abbot pacing to and fro.  
The Abbot is not happy ; and he throws  
A troubled look around him, for there goes  
The daily tale of that arch-caitiff Knox,  
Beneath whose buffets the Church reels and rocks.  
“Let heresy be bridled, else who knows  
What it may grow to.” Abbot, 'tis in vain ;  
The world is weary of thee and thy chain ;  
For men have seen a vision of delight,  
Whose cup of joyaunce the wide nations drain,  
Rising resistless, like an earthquake's might,  
Immortal Freedom, beautiful and bright !

## VI.

Why hast thou sunk, Crossraguel, in decay ?  
Say, was thy creed a window, through which light  
Smote in divineness on the troubled night  
Of man's existence, heralding the day,  
And shewing to his stumbling feet the way ?  
Thy voice, like to a god's, could make men heed,  
Could check the cruel and the murderous deed ;  
Say, didst thou chide the tyrant's cheek to clay,  
And make him tremble at thy word of doom ?  
Within thy bosom was there bounteous room  
For earth's pale thinkers in doubt's tempest driven,  
Hope with her candle smiling in the gloom ?  
Didst thou remember unto thee was given  
To make this earth a suburb unto Heaven ?

## VII.

Old ruin, thou art dead ; why dead so long ?  
Wert thou forgetful of thy heavenly birth,  
And trailed thy garments thro' the slime of earth ?  
Did thy hand take a bribe to wink at wrong ?  
Thou wert accounted wise ; thine *arm* was strong ;  
Was thy *heart* merciful, forgiving, just,  
And meek and saintly, knowing not the lust  
Of earth's ambition ? Didst thou loose a throng  
To rend and persecute, and call it love  
And faithfulness unto the power above ?

Ah ! thou wert proud and cruel in Heaven's sight,  
A vengeful eagle, not a peaceful dove,  
And so there fell upon thy walls the blight  
Of desolation, and of starless night.

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## ON REVISITING MY NATIVE PLACE.

SCENE of my childhood, once again I stand,  
A pilgrim to the old familiar place :  
Again I recognise on every hand  
The beauty and the mystery and grace  
That hang around the sweetness of thy face,  
Touching my bosom with a mournful bliss ;  
And while the scene all lovingly I trace,  
The breeze comes to me with its gladsome kiss,  
And whispers in my ear : *No other scene like this !*

Scenes fairer, grander, I have often seen,  
But none that so can nestle in my heart ;  
A voice comes to me from each meadow green ;  
From every bush, from every hedgerow, dart  
Old recollections, and dim tears will start  
Of sadness sweeter than the loudest joys.  
Old times seem of our being to be part,  
With all that pleases, nothing that annoys,  
The sunny hours of youth, the days when we were boys.

Where now are all my well-remembered friends ?  
Where now the playmates of those early days ?  
I come expectant ; scarce a hand extends  
A greeting to me—scarce a voice that says  
A word of welcome ; most upon me gaze  
With a cold stranger's eye. Ah ! it is lone  
To feel yourself forgotten in those ways  
Which in affection you had deemed your own,  
To stand in the old streets a stranger and unknown.

So be it. Yet the absence of old friends  
The more endears the scene itself to me.  
*It* has not changed ; the same blue sky still bends  
Above me its enduring canopy ;  
The fields the same, whence larks uprise in glee,  
Charming wide heaven in their melodious flight ;  
The old stream sings its way across the lea,  
Now in the gloom, now dancing in the light,  
And the unchanging hills still cheer me with their sight.

The fields where we have wandered in our youth  
Become the dreamland of our later years :  
Call it not fancy ; 'tis indeed a truth  
That falls in dewy blessing 'mong the tears  
'Of this our mortal life, that Fate's dread shears  
That desolate all else, still leave us *thee*,  
Thou Eden of our youth, which ever rears  
A paradise of dreams wherein we see  
The joys that once were ours but nevermore shall be.



My blessing on those days, those youthful days !  
I thank Thee, God, that they can never die.  
I thank Thee that around them ever plays  
A halo of divineness ; from the sky  
Down to the floweret, all that I descry,  
As in bright vision, is transfigured yet ;  
Those days that sainted in the memory lie  
Untroubled by a pain or a regret,  
Whose flowers can never fade, whose suns can never set.

Here, while old feelings gather at my heart,  
I muse within our well-remembered Glen.  
Thou gentle flow'ret, tell me what thou art ;  
Art thou a flower ? or spirit come to men  
To charm them back to innocence again  
By gazing in the quiet of thine eye ?  
Who loves thee should be pure, and hearken when  
With silent admonition thou dost try  
To chide him from his ill, to woo him to the sky.

Thou simple floweret, with thy dreamlike face,  
Thou set'st *me* dreaming, and methinks I see  
My boyish days pass by in playful chase  
When I, too, was a dweller here, like thee,  
My soul exulting in its dower of glee ;  
When life was purest pleasure, and the heart  
Knew no more sorrow than the bird or bee,  
Though forward-looking thoughts even then would dart,  
And seeming idle hours strange influence impart.

Ye little flowers, I love you every one ;  
Ye bring the breath of forgotten years :  
Ye are ambassadors that swiftly run  
To bring the image of your vanished peers  
Before my vision ; and my rapt ear hears  
Long-silent songsters lift their mellow lays  
In sweet groves of the heart ; and all that cheers  
The pensive spirit gathers to my gaze,  
And earth is warm and bright with suns of other days.

I stand, a stranger, by the door where first  
My mother tended me with loving care ;  
Doubtless, my mother, thou hadst often nursed  
The natural thought that I, low-slumbering there,  
If kindly heaven my youthful life should spare,  
Would be a stay and comforter to thee  
In days of feebleness and hoary hair :  
Fond dream ! my mother, it was not to be ;  
Too soon the grave did cast its shade 'twixt thee and me.

Embosomed in immortal bliss above,  
Dost thou recall our chequered life below ?  
Or dost thou intermit Heaven's song of love  
At times to come where earthly breezes blow,  
And stand beside me when I do not know ?  
Ah mother ! lost so long, my heart high beats  
At thought of coming days when we shall go  
In joy together through the golden streets,  
Where God's complacent smile heaven's happiness completes.

. . . . .  
 Scene of my youth, farewell ! farewell the hearth  
 Where I was lowly nurtured, where I grew  
 In sight of daily virtues which make earth  
 Still beautiful to me, and fresh with dew.  
 Farewell, dear household friends ! so kind, so true,  
 That beam upon me from those far-off days.  
 Those simple hearts that no ambition knew,  
 No touch of envy or of prideful ways,  
 The thought of whom brings love that kindles into praise.

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THE TOON O' MINNIBOLE.<sup>1</sup>

My blessing on thee, auld Maybole,  
 The toon where I was born ;  
 Beside the Wee Spout in the Glen  
 I passed life's sunny morn :  
     The rare auld toon,  
     The fair auld toon,  
     The toon o' Minnibole.

A tear slid silent doon my cheek  
 When I frae thee did part :  
 Where'er I gae I carry thee,  
 Auld Maybole, in my heart :  
     Thou dear auld toon,  
     Thou queer auld toon,  
     The toon o' Minnibole.

<sup>1</sup>The town of Maybole is often colloquially called "Minnibole."

And like the swallow, I hie back  
Ilk year to the auld toon ;  
Wi' what a joy I see again  
The green slopes o' Kildoon,  
And wander roun'  
The guid auld toon,  
The toon o' Minnibole.

Frae Mochrum to the Straiton hills,  
The haill expanse seems mine ;  
On nae sic bonnie scene as that  
The happy sun doth shine ;  
Frae Dailly hills  
To Patna kilns,  
Unmatched auld Minnibole.

Come back, far days, when for the sea  
We started fu' o' splore :  
How lonesome to me now the hush  
Upon Culzean's dear shore,  
Where ance we sang,  
And lap, and flang,  
Nor thocht o' Minnibole.

Crossraguel's haunted wa's wi' dread  
Our boyish hearts did fill,

By auld Baltersan for lang hours  
We ginnelled at the Mill,  
Then hirpled hame  
Barefit and lame,  
To scones in Minnibole.

The Auld Green Schule! where at the ba'  
We played till oot o' breath,  
And where our wee bit quarrels whiles  
We settled up the Peth!  
I fear us boys  
Had tricks and ploys  
Unkenn'd in Minnibole.

The Auld Schule brought us lear enough;  
And when we won our prize,  
And to the auld folk took it hame,  
What joy danced in their eyes!  
They thocht, nae doot,  
We'd a' turn oot  
Great folks in Minnibole.

But time has swept us far apart;  
Some, posts wi' credit fill,  
While some sleep soun' at the Kirkport,  
Some at the Clachan hill,  
And a' maun gae,  
Nae distant day,  
Far, far frae Minnibole.

CULZEAN<sup>1</sup> SHORE REVISITED.

My Past sits here beside me on the sand,  
Within its lap the days long gone before ;  
It conjures to my sight the youthful band  
Of my companions in the days of yore,  
With shout and laughter filling all the shore ;  
It brings in mournful cadence to my ears  
The long-hushed voices of my home once more,  
Sad now as dirges of departed years ;  
The loving and the loved, although they bring me tears.

Culzean's lone shore ! amid the city's din  
How I have longed for quiet of thy face !  
Thy hush well taught me solitude is kin  
To thoughtfulness, and thoughtfulness to grace.  
It taught me, too, to hate things mean and base,  
And proud, and cruel, and tyrannical ;  
Therefore to me thou art a holy place,  
A solace in sad thoughts that come to all ;  
A refuge and a shrine to raise me when I fall.

And so at times, as now, my steps I bend  
Unto this place of dreams, again to hear  
The sea's soft murmur, like the voice of friend ;  
To plunge into the waters cool and clear ;  
To watch the sea-birds swoop and reappear ;

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced Cullean.

To lie among the bent, in silent mood,  
And see with wonder, in my own career,  
God, like a reaper, bring me sheaves of good,  
With glory flushing now Culzean's deep solitude.

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## THE BURNS CENTENARY BANQUETS, 1859.

RAB, you're in guid company the night ;  
Auld Scotia ne'er saw sic a sight ;  
Frae north to south, frae left to right  
    They're a' forgathered ;  
Your hunder years, through dark and bright,  
    Thou now hast weathered.

Hoot, lad, you flyted sair on Fortune,  
That wi' guid chiels she aft was sportin',  
Yet aye you'd coggies for the scartin',  
    Or licked the spurtle ;  
And now this night thy muse they're courtin'  
    Owre wine and turtle.

Fortune, you see, has something mended ;  
For wealth she didna care to send it ;  
E'en thousands she could weel hae lent it  
    To sic a debtor ;  
To mak' a *name*, fu' weel she kenned it,  
    You liked *that* better.

'Twas muckle better, Rabbie dear,  
The course that Fortune gar'd thee steer ;  
Fools may hae thousands in the year  
    And unmissed dee ;  
We a' had missed a rowth o' cheer  
    Withouten thee.

Each Scotsman wears thee in his heart,  
Nae crawlin' sycophant thou wert,  
Thou playedst nae twa-faced knavish part,  
    Aye bauld and sturdy ;  
Hadst thou been rich we wadna cared  
    Sae muckle for thee.

And yet I dinna mean to vaunt ye,  
And were ye livin' you'd no' want me ;  
No, Rabbie lad, we winna saunt ye  
    This wee while yet ;  
An' honest man, wi' fauts in plenty,  
    That's Robin's fit.

But Robin's fauts we winna spier ;  
The lad's been dead this sixty year,  
And they hae sat on them up there,  
    His God and he :  
This day he kens them better far  
    Than you or me.



Ah, Burns ! thou hadst a vision ance,  
Ben in the auld clay biggin's spence,  
When Scotia's muse wi' pridefu' glance  
    Enwreath'd thy brow ;  
But thou saw 'st naething in thy trance  
    Like this just now.

Thy country rising in her pride,  
And a' her sons, baith far and wide,  
Invoking blessings on his head  
    Wha wrote their sangs ;  
Doing their best, though now he's dead,  
    To richt his wrangs.

Not Scotia alone will raise thee ;  
But Johnny Bull will up and phrase thee ;  
America and Australasia  
    They too will meed thee ;  
And aiblins ane or twa will praise thee,  
    Wha couldna read thee.

Auld Scotland's inmost heart is glad  
This day a hunder years now fled,  
That Robert Burns, her ploughman lad,  
    Was born in Kyle ;  
And gratefu' she a note hath made  
    Baith day and style.

Now, Robin, thou hast got a name  
Among the starry sons of fame !  
To love old Scotland, canty dame,  
    Thou wertna slack,  
Nor is thy country loath or lame  
    To pay thee back.

Thy fields scarce gave thee meat and claes,  
Thou wert a puir man a' thy days ;  
But stoytin 'mong earth's "banks and braes"  
    Thou wert so human  
A' feel the glamour of thy ways,  
    Baith man and woman.

Hard, hard thy lot, yet proud thine e'e,  
And from it could wild lightning flee !  
What saut tears moistened it, ah me,  
    Nae tongue may tell ;  
Let's learn frae thee, and wiser be  
    Than thou thyself'.

Meantime the earth thy praises fill,  
And thou art seated far and still  
A king upon Parnassus hill :  
    To end this matter,  
Thy fame, like Tam o' Shanter's yill,  
    'S aye growing better.

## DEAR LOVE OF MINE.

DEAR love of mine, I cannot tell  
How long I've loved thee, and how well ;  
How my heart dances in its gladness,  
Anon is touched with love's sweet sadness,  
Arraying earth and sky and sea  
In beauty that it steals from thee ;  
Thee in things beautiful I see,  
And all things beautiful in thee !  
Thou givest to the rose its spell,  
Its beauty to the heather-bell,  
And the pale lily's bridal dress  
Thou clothest with its loveliness ;  
And in the violet dim I trace  
The loving meekness of thy face.  
There's not a glade where zephyr blows,  
There's not a flower that Flora knows,  
There's not a green or blooming tree  
That is not eloquent of thee.  
To me, wherever my abode,  
Thine image cometh ; not a road,  
Where'er my willing steps may wend,  
But I can see for ever bend  
Thy gentle face and beaming eye  
Between me and the rounded sky.  
The rivulet in sportsome game  
Soft murmurs, as it runs, thy name ;

And on the gale in wild career,  
Or zephyr whispering in mine ear,  
I pour a fond love-sigh from me,  
And bid them bear it unto thee.  
I love thee better, Love of mine,  
Than merry lark loves sweet sunshine,  
Or than lone Echo loves to sit  
And prate to sounds that nourish it,  
Or than the breeze in fitful sighs  
Delights to kiss the violet's eyes,  
Upbreathing fragrance to the skies.  
But of thy charms I may not speak ;  
Of roses glowing on thy cheek,  
Or of the witchery of thine eye,  
Whose tender love-light flashes by  
Whene'er thine eyelids thou upraisest  
And into eyes that love thee gazest ;  
Or speak once of thy ruddy lip,  
Or words so wistful that there trip ;  
For of thy voice I quite despair  
To tell the sweetness, or the air  
Of tenderness that steals around  
The heart that listens to the sound.  
Love, better loved than power or fame,  
I shall for ever bless thy name ;  
Thy life hath taught me how to live,  
And heaven, I know, will blessing give ;

The goodness looking from thine eye  
Shall teach me how at last to die.  
Then blessings on my Love's dear face,  
Her worth, her modesty, her grace.

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## JOY.

Joy, lightest-hearted, come and see  
The home I have prepared for thee ;  
A sweet home on a gentle mound,  
Round which the zephyrs dance with sound  
As stilly as the lightsome swing  
And fanning of a fairy's wing.  
The zephyrs wheel with merry bout  
In at the window, and then out,  
The fragrance flung around revealing  
How that the rogues have just been stealing  
Fond kisses from the sweet woodbine,  
The wallflower, or the eglantine !  
How on the ceasing of each shower  
They rifle scents from brier and flower,  
Then hie them, laughing, to our room,  
And fill it with the rich perfume.

See Rosa wander 'mong her bowers,  
Fairer than Flora 'mong her flowers !  
Attending breezes gather sweets  
That nestle in those still retreats,

And scamper off in eager race  
To spill them upon Rosa's face.  
O how they love to frisk and dance  
Within the light of that fond glance !  
With what a frolic wing they dare  
To work sweet troubles in her hair !  
Of troubles they but little reck,  
Tossing the tresses on her neck.  
Dear Rosa, wife beyond compare,  
So tender, innocent, and fair.

Joy, blithe and nimble, come and be  
A guest with Rosa and with me ;  
Come, sit beside us at our fire,  
And hear her trill our rustic lyre ;  
Or hear her read from poet's page,  
Young, yet with wisdom of the sage :  
A noble thought her cheek will flush,  
A pretty thought her tongue will hush ;  
She stays to fondle it, and then  
She tastes its sweetness o'er again.  
A thought of wrong, or mean-souled lie,  
Will kindle lightning in her eye !  
Hark how she sings throughout the house,  
Or trips as quiet as a mouse,  
The while the household work goes pat,  
As if the fairies helped thereat !  
She knows what everything should cost,  
She sees that not a crumb is lost,

Well knowing shallow purse hath need  
Of good thrift for a generous deed.

O Joy ! what word need I say more ?  
We bid thee welcome to our door ;  
Be this the dwelling for us three—  
For Rosa, and for me and thee.

---

## PRIDE.

WHY should a man be proud ?  
What thing so frail as he !  
He drew his being from the dust,  
And dust again shall be.  
Why should a little dust be proud,  
Soon to own nothing but its shroud ?

Why should a man be proud ?  
What thing so vile as he !  
His heart is as a darksome den  
Where foul things love to be.  
Why should a sinful man be proud,  
O'ershadowed by Heaven's thunder-cloud ?

Go, frail and guilty man,  
From dreams of greatness cease ;  
Kneel 'mong thy sins until thou taste  
Humility's sweet peace ;  
And Jesus with love's gentle hand  
Shall lead thee to the prideless land.

## THE MAIDEN'S SORROW.

A MAIDEN sits in her cottage-home,  
With all things round her glad ;  
Her cheek is fair 'neath her raven hair,  
Why then is the maiden sad ?

The clustering roses around her door  
Look in with loving eye,  
And balm they fling on the breezes' wing ;  
Then why doth the maiden sigh ?

That cottage home looks out on the sea,  
Where happy sunbeams sleep ;  
A sister's care smooths her raven hair,  
Why then doth the maiden weep ?

Across her path a shadow doth lie,  
A shadow dark and deep ;  
At evening's close, like Mary, she goes  
To a new-made grave to weep.

The maiden loved ; but her lover had  
Stern tryst with Death to keep :  
A dead love's smart she wears in her heart ;  
Ah ! well may the maiden weep.



## ALICE AND ROBIN.

THERE lay a soldier on his weary bed,  
Sore wounded and half dead :  
A rustic was he, bred unto the plough,  
With youth's unwrinkled brow ;  
His unenfeebled eye shot in the gloom,  
As if it lent a brightness to the room.

It was an hospital in which he lay  
Through heavy night and day ;  
There lay his soldier comrades all around  
Feeble and bandage bound ;  
Some sighed, some talked of fields where they had fought,  
Some spake of home—and then of *his* he thought.

He thinks of the old home among the hills,  
And then his big eye fills  
With burning drops which blind him as they fall  
Upon the bed's white pall,  
But which make dearer to him the old scene  
Borne in his heart, wherever he had been.

A moorland homestead with its cozy thatch,  
And little garden-patch  
Sacred to herbs of culinary kind :  
There hang upon his mind  
The presence and the hush of lonely hills,  
The hush the deeper for the tinkling rills.

He thinks of his old mother in the cot,  
And of her widowed lot ;  
He pictures her anticipated joy  
When she should see her boy  
Returned in safety from the wars—and then  
He glances at his bandages again.

He sees her bending o'er the sacred page  
That makes the simple sage,  
Her mute entreaty to the King on high  
Ascendeth on a sigh,  
And straightway heaven-breathed confidence and rest  
Take sweet possession of the widow's breast.

Then to a neighbour cot his thoughts would roam,  
Unto a maiden's home ;  
A maiden with blue eyes and sunny hair  
Above a forehead fair,  
Who flitted like a sunbeam 'mong the hills,  
With voice as joyous as the singing rills.

A vision of delight was Alice Gray,  
All beauteous as the day ;  
Amid life's homely duties her cheek grew  
Unto the peach's hue ;  
Graceful, not fragile, was the maiden's form,  
Moulded in sunshine, and in rain, and storm.

Fair Alice trothed her plight one far-off day  
Unto the youth that lay  
Upon that sick and uncomplaining bed,  
Sore wounded and half dead.  
Ah ! sad it is to think what unknown ills  
Were waiting for the maiden of the hills.

A letter came—writ by a stranger's hand ;  
Poor Alice dared not stand  
To read the tidings of that silent sheet ;  
With heart that scarcely beat  
She dazedly made out *this* truth alone,  
He could not write, his brave right arm was gone.

Upon her cheek the healthful peach swift grew  
Unto the lily's hue,  
She gasped for breath, she trembled as a leaf  
In that great storm of grief.  
Well might she tremble in that hour of fate,  
Her lover maimed, enfeebled, desolate.

Straightway sped Alice to his mother's cot ;  
The mother too had got  
The tidings heavy with a thousand fears.  
They mingled prayers and tears.  
The mother looks at her with questioning eyes,  
And Alice, drying up her tears, replies :

“Dear Robin writes me in this letter how  
    He frees me from my vow  
To marry him : he says he’s maimed for life,  
    And could not keep a wife,  
And so he cannot ask me for his bride ;  
But my heart whispers : Cannot God provide ?”

The proverb sayeth true, “He giveth twice  
    Who giveth in a trice” ;  
Whether it be of purse he gives a part,  
    Or warm love of the heart.  
As Alice’s sole wealth in loving lay  
She hasted on her charitable way.

How weary was the unfamiliar road  
    Unto the drear abode  
Where Robin lay, unconscious of the form  
    That through the rain and storm  
Was hieing to him with its tender love,  
Pure as a messenger from realms above.

No sentry ever ventured to gainsay  
    The maiden on her way.  
From rough men nothing but the kindest word  
    The maiden’s quick ear heard.  
All paid heart-homage to the gentle face  
As if she were the lady of the place.

Within the hospital behold her stand,  
    Grasping dear Robin's hand ;  
Before he could recover from surprise  
    That filled his wondering eyes,  
She kissed him with the warmth of loving lips,  
Their honey sweeter than the bee e'er sips.

She flung her arms around the prostrate frame,  
    Soft-breathing Robin's name ;  
He blesses gracious Heaven as he espies  
    The love-light in her eyes :  
Grim-visaged soldiers whisperingly said  
It was an angel stood beside the bed.

O day too fleeting, with its wealth of love,  
    And bliss like that above !  
They spake in accents hushed, mysterious, low,  
    Which only lovers know :  
For hours sat Alice, quiet, soothing, bland,  
Holding in hers his solitary hand.

But love's keen eye detected greater harm  
    Than even the ruined arm ;  
She marked too well an inward wound that lurked  
    And secret havoc worked ;  
For in his stalwart frame war's hateful knife  
Had struck and shattered the deep springs of life.

There Robin lies, and adds unto his store  
    Of delicate heart-lore,  
That day he finds that a true woman's love,  
    Like that of God's above,  
Is deep and fixed and centred evermore,  
Whate'er misfortunes enter at the door.

As Alice sits there, holding Robin's hand,  
    O how could he withstand  
The tender-spoken words and the soft touch  
    That, silent, said so much !  
"And well," she said, "three hands two mouths can feed ;  
With God's good blessing it were no great deed."

Could they not live 'mong the encircling hills,  
    Remote from human ills ?  
What ! tear poor Robin from her bleeding heart ?  
    The guilty thought depart !  
No ; she would work her fingers to the bone  
Rather than leave him helpless and alone.

So what could Robin do that wondrous day  
    But let her have her way ?  
And in due time they wedded and withdrew  
    To where scarce any knew ;  
And Robin, 'mong the wilds, was blessed to prove  
The might, the majesty of woman's love.

Sequestered cottage : home of peace and love

As of the nested dove :

There Alice toiled on with a sweet content

For Robin frail and bent,

For Robin frail and bent before his time,

As if old age were mingled with his prime.

Think not all glory from the earth hath fled,

That nobleness is dead :

While hearts beat true, and lips fond kisses give,

Heroic deeds shall live :

And thus we find, where'er the broad sun shines,

Earth hath its heroes and its heroines.

---

LIFE.

MY life on earth is but an episode

In my existence ; but a wayside inn

Where I put up and tarry for a night,

As on I journey through Eternity.

And if my heart be wise, it little counts

The richness or the poorness of the fare,

The failure or success, assigned me here,

As these are measured by the common eye.

Success, alas ! brings often pride of heart,

And pride shuts Heaven's inexorable door ;

But meek-eyed failure brings humility,

Upon whose brow Christ's fingers bind for aye

The glory of His own Beatitudes,  
Whose precepts yet, like sceptre of a King,  
Shall be obeyed from willing shore to shore.  
Then let us dare be humble, and aloft  
Hold lowliness, Christ's banner, to the winds ;  
And though our hand be circumscribed in giving,  
Just Heaven will judge us, not by what we did,  
But what we would have done, had power been given.  
Thus seeming failure turns to true success,  
And sorrow's fruits, so bitter in their growth,  
At last hang sweet upon the tree of life,  
Of which men take, and eat, and live for ever.

---

DE PROFUNDIS.

WHY was I ever unto such life born ?  
My God, why is it that I live at all,  
To add forlornness to a state forlorn,  
And to life's bitterness a deeper gall ?

And what is life ? is it to breathe the air,  
To walk the earth, the arching sky o'erhead,  
Laboriously to garner up despair,  
And add one more to the yet living dead ?

What havoc make we of life's little span,  
Ourselves enslaving striving to be free !  
God His own image made and called it man ;  
What thing that crawleth is so vile as he ?



The toad, detested, crawling from its lair,  
To-day is perfect as the first of toads ;  
But where to-day man's likeness to the pair  
That paced in Eden with the gait of gods ?

Sad is man's story since that day when driven  
From Earth's young Paradise ; what heart may tell  
O'er man's strange sinning what strange grief in heaven,  
Or what yet stranger jubilee in hell !

All are not like ; but most their days pass on  
In idle pleasures or too late regret ;  
To-day repeats what yesterday has done,  
And so each morrow till their sun shall set.

They lay their heads down and sigh out their breath,  
And friends weep over the unconscious form :  
Who shall dispute the victory with Death,  
Or who remonstrate with the noisome worm ?

And when at length the rivulet of Time  
Loses itself in the Eternal sea,  
And man awakens in the unknown clime,  
Who may imagine what that scene shall be ?

"O man," God says, "I gave thee length of years ;  
Of My Eternity I gave threescore ;  
What hast thou done with them ? A truce with tears ;  
The day of tears and penitence is o'er.

“Shew Me thy deeds. I do not heed thy grief,  
Nor the deep pallor that o’erspreads thy brow ;  
Thou wouldst be busy since man’s life is brief,  
And nought so profitless as weeping now.”

Here let me pause and ponder, till my heart  
In such communing find immortal food ;  
So shall the future play a gracious part,  
Casting its shadow on me *now* for good.

---

MY PAST.

THE past is not a cavern or abyss  
Wherein our deeds lie buried out of sight,  
No more to be encountered ; it is rather  
A sunken Vale unvisited of sun,  
Where wander, like pale ghosts, our Yesterdays,  
Each with a wallet slung upon its back,  
In which are stored the evil deeds of men  
That day it left the earth ; companionless  
Each walks upon its solitary way,  
Although there surge around the dismal host  
Of Days departed, multitudinous  
As gnats disporting in the sunny beam.  
I pity you, ye silent Yesterdays,  
Doomed with such burden, and so tottering steps,  
To traverse Hades till the judgment-day.  
A hateful load ; and yet ye guard it well,

As if ye bore the treasure of a god.  
Let me undo the wallet from your back,  
And for a moment let me peer within.  
But no, I would not ; for my heart well knows  
I would see nothing but old sins of mine,  
Lead-heavy now, though once they seemed so light.  
All sin is death, and yet it cannot die.  
How strange this soul of mine ! how mean it is,  
And yet how mighty ! My poor paltriest act  
Becomes immortal by my doing it.  
I can make evil my familiar friend,  
Yea, like a god, *create* iniquity,  
While yet for goodness feeble as a child.  
Sin seems my servant, and I say, "come here,"  
And, lo, he cometh with obsequious smile ;  
But when I weary of his company,  
And bid him "go," he says, my heart's his home,  
Like fabled Frankenstein, he will not budge.  
Deceitful Vice, how thou ensnarest men !  
Betraying all ; and yet they trust thee still !  
They sigh to taste the honey of thy lip ;  
They know no softness like thy downy cheek,  
No sweet enchantment like that breast of thine.  
Poor fools and blind ! thus cozened of our souls.  
Why should we plant delusive Upas trees  
Along our path of life, with shouts of glee,  
Yet wonder why their shade brings death and doom ?  
How we have stuffed with terrors all our Past !

It is the Sphinx's den, from which she stalks  
To daily sit beside the ways of men,  
And with conundrums terrify and slay.  
No Past, my soul, there is no Past for thee :  
The Past is but the Future unarrived,  
But speeding on to whelm thee, or to bless.  
Look on yon sun, and list his parable ;  
Behold him sinking amid western gold,  
As bidding earth adieu : he is not dead.  
Wait but a little, and the east once more  
Shall see his flaming altar, unto which  
Rejoicing nations will bring orisons.  
How much they teach us, Nature's ministers,  
Yet pass us by, unless we seek to learn.

Let me set forth another parable.  
The beings which we call Ephemera,  
That live but for a day, how *they* misjudge  
Of life, and death, and immortality !  
They see the sun set, but ne'er see it rise,  
And so conclude that it is set for aye  
And teach their children so from age to age.  
You cannot blame those tiny infidels ;  
They buzz their hour away, they know no more ;  
The beam they dance in, their eternity !

Are we ourselves not creatures of a day,  
And know so little ? 'tis our *dreams* are true ;  
For heaven comes nearest to us in our dreams,  
Our waking dreams, our silent reveries,

Our expeditions to far lands of thought,  
In which our souls dilate and seem to slip  
The bounds and moorings of mortality  
As heaven and earth were jumbled into one !

I carry to my grave one reverie  
Which starts cold drops upon my brow even yet  
Methought my spirit, like a flaming sun,  
Swept in its orbit through a starless sky  
Until its circuit brought it to God's throne,  
Whence first it issued on its way to earth.  
Before the throne, too, stood my Yesterdays,  
Each holding in its hands my secret sins,  
Each sin exclaiming from its spectral throat,  
"Thou art my father, hide thy face no more,  
All earth is here a witness to thy shame."  
I stood and trembled in my dumb amaze,  
And looked around, but there was none to help ;  
Eternity brought chains to bind me with,  
Though then a cobweb could have fettered me.  
I knelt for mercy on the floor of heaven  
And with wild sobs besieged the feet of God.  
An angel with a pitying face and mien  
Touched then my hand, and whispered in mine ear :  
"Behold, poor penitent, the Friend of man."  
I looked around, and standing by my side  
I saw a form like to the Son of God,  
With features merciful, but sorrow-marred.  
He brushed my tears aside as thus He spake

In accents heard in Galilee of old :  
“He loves my name, this weeping penitent ;  
He loveth much, and hath been much forgiven,  
Nor needs he other title to the skies.  
I saw him yesternight upon his knees  
Bewailing bitterly tormenting sins,  
Sins long confessed, and therefore long forgiven.  
Come, weary one, beside me, else alas !  
My life how barren, and my cross how vain.  
Take, angel, now those long-accusing sins  
And bury them for ever from his sight.”  
The pitying angel then advanced and took  
Those slimy horrors from the spectres’ hands,  
Each thrusting forth its forked envenomed tongue  
And glaring with malignant, sleepless eyes.  
He held them writhing in his lifted hand,  
Then threw them headlong in the burning lake,  
And as they hissing fell I saw them sink  
Deeper than plummet ever sounded sea.

I woke as from a dream. I thanked my God.  
Was it a vision, or a prophecy ?

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## THE RAINDROP.

I STOOD and mused beside a summer brook,  
And watched upon its breast a foam-tipped drop ;  
And thus the drop and I held colloquy :

“Farewell,” I said, “thou tiny voyager ;  
Thou, too, hadst work appointed unto thee,  
And thou hast done it to the utmost jot.  
Thy hap it was to fall among the hills,  
Or on the moor or plain, and found’st thy way  
Through winding veins and crevices of earth,  
With juice and plenty blessing as thou couldst.  
And now thy task is ended ; but I see  
(Like my own heart) that contact with the earth  
Has fouled the mirror of thy purity,  
Though not for long ; for Ocean’s crystal wave  
Shall cleanse thy bosom of its every stain,  
Till thou become as hymning angel pure.  
Thou peaceful pilgrim, singing to the sea,  
I envy thee thy sweet tranquillity :  
Unlike to me, no guilty Past hast thou,  
No Future with its pitiless assize ;  
But in the consciousness of work well done  
Thou speedest on to thine Elysium,  
Where to the piping of rejoicing winds  
Thou shalt disport thee in thy ocean-home,  
And help to toss a navy on thy back.  
Farewell I bid thee, passing traveller ;  
We met a moment, now we part for aye,  
And hill and dale shall know thee nevermore.”

Slow-linging in an eddy of the brook  
The raindrop answered, half-upbraidingly :  
“Thou errest much. I go away, ’tis true,

But go away in order to return,  
For Ocean is *my* pathway to the plains.  
The Sun, ere long, with dalliance and with kiss  
Shall waft me to the sky, whence I shall fall  
On plain or upland, in refreshing shower,  
Again to wrestle through the veins of earth.  
Thus have I circled through ten thousand years,  
And thus shall circle through ten thousand more,  
My foot ne'er weary in its pilgrimage.  
Presumptuous though thou deem me, let me speak,  
And let a raindrop be thy counsellor :  
God's hand hath made us both, appointed us  
The limits of our being and our work,  
And I have kept my first estate, hast *thou* ?  
Thy spirit has a mightier sweep than mine,  
Thine eyes can overflow with human tears,  
Thy heart with pity, both to me denied ;  
But faithfulness to duty is Heaven's test  
In whose regard there is no great, no small,  
Alike a dewdrop and a continent.  
Be not offended though I seem to chide,  
I who am little as compared with thee.  
I and each atom of the Universe,  
Each law and attribute of Nature's frame,  
Keep ever busy at our destined task,  
No moment's respite either given or sought.  
Toil is the lot of all, God's ordinance,  
Imposed upon Himself and us alike.



Yea, from the angels' song God turns His ear  
To catch the sigh of labour done for Him.  
Thou talkest vainly of Elysium !  
Go build thy heaven of daily deeds of love  
And find Elysium in doing good.  
Had not thine eyes been holden, thou hadst marked  
(Thy soul all thrilled with rapturous delight)  
The stream of being tending to one end,  
The consummation of created things,  
When God, thy Father, shall be all in all.  
How canst thou rest content without some share  
In bringing in God's kingdom on the earth,  
His throne erected without help from thee ?  
Make God Himself thy debtor ; bring to Him  
Some souls like jewels to enrich His crown,  
Bright jewels gathered from Earth's slime by thee.  
Meantime, Earth shivers in her nakedness  
And cries to thee for help ; thy mother-earth,  
Within whose bosom thy strange being woke  
From nothingness to immortality.  
She is thy mother ; kiss her tears away !  
Her heart is breaking o'er her wayward sons  
Who stagger onward, thoughtless, to their doom  
God's voice unheeded though He call from heaven  
They are thy brothers, thy own kith and kin,  
Who have forgotten how divine they are,  
And bartered their eternity away  
For earth's poor pottage, and the drunkard's song.

*They* have forgotten, but forget not thou  
That once thou wert a reveller thyself  
In that far land of God-forgetfulness.  
Yea, when adoring at the Saviour's feet,  
In love, in wonder, and in ravishment,  
Let the Past come and shake its finger at thee,  
Thy sin, though pardoned, unforgetable.  
Thy place is in the dust, for thou hast sinned,  
Yet even the swine-trough of the prodigal  
As in his wretchedness he eyes its husks,  
Proclaims this truth, like lips of Christ Himself :  
Better a sinner than a Pharisee.  
Search heaven as with a candle, thou shalt find  
No Pharisee in all its golden streets  
Flaunting his pride and his phylacteries.  
But it is peopled by earth's sinful ones,  
Shamefaced and lowly, though forgiven for all.  
Think, and be humble, but be helpful too ;  
Thou art God's labourer, and He needs thine arm,  
Yet stand'st thou idle in the market-place.  
Thine idle hours the angels marvel at !  
Man's idleness is Satan's masterpiece,  
Seeming no sin, yet filling Tophet up !  
Be no more idle ; 'tis a God that calls.  
Out with thy sickle, for the fields are white,  
And glad the heart of the Great Husbandman.  
A little labour, then comes Harvest-home,  
Thy sheaves bestowed in garner of the skies.

Up and be doing, for it is thy life,  
'Tis not too late yet to redeem the time.  
Be thou brave knight and hero to thy King,  
Forth to His battles and do valiantly.  
Why hangs thy sword inglorious by thy side ?  
Are there no legionary hosts to quell ?  
No foes to lead into captivity ?  
Whate'er He bid thee, see thou do it well ;  
Where'er He send thee, be thy going prompt,  
Nor be a laggard in His messages.  
To work is worship ; in His vineyard work,  
Not for thy wages at the set of sun,  
But for the love of Him who loveth thee.  
Thus, child of the Eternal, fully claim  
Thy heritage of immortality ;  
Like me thou needest an eternity  
To live and work in, day and night, for aye."

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### TWO QUESTIONS.

WHAT is the sweetest of all earthly things ?  
Amid the calm which righteous Victory brings,  
To hear the song a happy conscience sings.

What is the saddest sight upon the earth ?  
To see a spirit, heavenly in its birth,  
Quaffing destruction, and it deems it mirth.

## ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG FRIEND.

I SAW him dead. I felt his forehead cold,  
And sadly looked into the half-closed eyes ;  
A cloud of sorrow seemed around us rolled  
Hiding all refuge underneath the skies ;  
Nor Father's sigh, nor Mother's bitter tear,  
Could save their darling from an early bier.

Why on that young face should lie Death's pale hue,  
Where should be playing the sweet smile of mirth ?  
God must have work for the young soul to do  
In other regions than this troubled earth ;  
And while *we* see the body and the shroud,  
The soul exulteth 'mid hosannas loud.

The hearse we followed down the quaint old street,  
Thinking strange thoughts that may not all be told ;  
Along our way we half had hoped to meet  
The loving Jesus, as in Nain of old,  
And see Him stop the bier, the while He cries  
In the deaf ear of the young man, " Arise."

We did not see Him, yet was Jesus there,  
The Comforter of every weary heart ;  
Ye weary ones, send up your silent prayer  
That turns to blessedness e'en sorrow's smart ;  
How many flowers, immortal in their bloom,  
Are gathered in the shadow of the tomb !

Ah ! many joys with that young life are dead ;  
A parent's budding hopes, a parent's pride.  
We laid him gently in his lowly bed,  
We left him sleeping by his brother's side :  
Calm be their slumbers underneath the sod  
Until awakened by the trump of God.

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## ON THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A FRIEND.

DEPARTED friend, we bid thee long adieu,  
But not for ever—we are mortal too ;  
Heaven is not distant—but one gasp for breath,  
And thou wert hurried, in the arms of Death,  
Unto that region where the spirits blest  
Toil in God's service, and they deem it rest ;  
For, in the service of the world above,  
All love is labour, and all labour love ;  
“ Work while 'tis day,” is still the heavenly call,  
And work in one world fits for work in all.  
Methinks God's worlds all are interlaced,  
And as He needed thee He sent in haste,  
Having some purpose elsewhere to fulfil,  
For which earth's discipline had taught thee skill ;  
And so, I doubt not, thou hast now begun  
Another work beneath another sun.  
Not vainly God creates brave souls like thee,  
Rugged and righteous, who will bow no knee

Save to the Highest, from whose lips ne'er flit  
The honeyed nothings of the hypocrite ;  
Stern as a prophet, girt about with zeal,  
And yet a man who could for others feel ;  
Yes, such wert thou—at times misunderstood,  
Fearless and honest, dutiful and good.  
Yet, standing at thy grave with bowed head,  
We wondered why thy God thus smote thee dead,  
Breaking in fragments all thy faithful life,  
The hope of children, and the love of wife ;  
Yet then, even then, our deepest thought was this :  
" 'Twas God that did it, can God do amiss ? "  
O God of mercy, calm the widow's fears ;  
O Man of Sorrows, dry the orphans' tears.

## DEATH-BED BREATHINGS.

To sigh upon my bed, with death so near,  
How sad it were, if Jesus were not here !

My arm so feeble that was once so strong,  
And yet it will be feebler still ere long.

Poor helpless hands, and heavy as the clay,  
Ah me, how heavy, yet how worn away !

I cannot stand, but happy thoughts I think ;  
And in my weakness I have wine to drink ;

The wine of God's dear promise that He gave  
To help the helpless and the lost to save.

My heart beats faintly, and my head doth swim,  
My ear is heavy, and my eyes grow dim.

How dark it grows ! Come, Jesus, by me stand,  
And in the darkness hold me by the hand.

How sweet to know I have in Thee a Friend  
Who will not leave me at my journey's end.

A cross, O Jesus, and a borrowed grave ;  
This all Thy portion when Thou cam'st to save.

There was no sorrow like to that of Thine,  
Yet all Thy sorrow was for sins of mine.

Almighty Saviour, smitten through with fears ;  
O strangest spectacle—a God in tears !

Come, Lord, with blessing ; see me hold out still  
Weak, empty hands of prayer for Thee to fill.

Speak, O my Saviour, bid my heart rejoice ;  
What music is there like my Saviour's voice ?

The words of Jesus ; hark, I hear Him say :  
"Thy night is ending ; now comes heaven's bright day.

“Thou weary one, thy trials all are past ;  
Thou long hast waited ; here is heaven at last.”

Blest words of Jesus, flashing in the gloom,  
And lighting even the journey through the tomb.

Come, great Redeemer, in Thy love come down ;  
I love Thee better than heaven's golden crown.

Come in Thy mercy ; let me change ere long  
The sigh of sorrow for the angels' song.

Then all my joy to hear Thy voice so sweet,  
And all my heaven to worship at Thy feet.

No golden streets my raptured eye shall trace,  
Nor jasper walls, for gazing on Thy face.

Weep not for me, ye loving, earthly friends ;  
Heaven's joy begins when earth's last sorrow ends.

Behold heaven's feast spread by the loving Lord ;  
And I am bidden to the banquet-board.

Weep ye because the captive now goes free ?  
Weep rather that ye cannot come with me.

Farewell, ye loved ones ! but I trust ye may  
Think sometimes of me when I'm far away.



Life's lamp is burnt to its last flickering breath ;  
Come now and finish thy strange work, O Death !

I do not fear thee ; for thy sting's withdrawn,  
And death and darkness bring me heaven's sweet dawn.

How dear the thought, as Death beclouds mine eyes,  
My death-day on the earth, my birth-day in the skies.

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BIGOTRY.

OURS is the road to Heaven, let bigots cry ;  
All roads lead heavenward, is my heart's reply.  
Dear unto God His pilgrims as they go  
Through heat of summer and through winter's snow.  
In features diverse, diverse oft in view,  
But to *two* points unalterably true ;  
One point on earth, the other point above,  
The cross of Jesus, and God's throne of love.  
Heaven's hero-host, embattled see them stand,  
The chivalry of Jesus, sword in hand,  
Who bear His banner bravely in the fight,  
Yet clothed with meekness fairer than the light.  
Thus toil the pilgrims to their rest above,  
Their lowliness transfigured into love ;  
And love is lowliness in earth and heaven,  
Men love the most who have been most forgiven ;

And angels, too, Heaven's vessels humbly bear,  
The raptest seraph is the lowliest there.  
Then let us greet each pilgrim with God-speed,  
Nor scorn a brother for whom Christ did bleed,  
And who would bleed, too, for his Saviour's name,  
And welcome pain and penury and shame ;  
And though at times a tear his eye may dim  
He falters not, for little unto him  
The roughness or the steepness of the road  
If it but lead him to the throne of God.  
He seeks the kingdom that afar doth shine,  
Although he travel by a way not mine ;  
Forgiven and ransomed he shall reach its shore  
And get Heaven's welcome, and shall we get more ?  
Then let us feel earth's greatest heresy  
Is lack of love and Heaven's sweet charity.

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## SELF-REMONSTRANCE.

WHAT tender-mercy Heaven unto me shows,  
And yet my heart is all unhappy still ;  
In vain God with unstinted hand bestows,  
The heart how little, yet how hard to fill !  
  
My restless heart, for ever seeking bliss,  
Of each poor pleasure clamorous for a part,  
Thou seekest happiness, forgetting this,  
God has no blessing for the selfish heart.

Seek not for Peace, all bootless is the quest ;  
What right hast thou for happiness to seek ?  
How often hast thou cheered the weary breast,  
Or wiped the tear from misery's lone cheek ?

O, how canst thou be happy ? dost thou know  
How many wretched round about thee live ?  
Dar'st thou be happy in the sight of woe ?  
What cheer hast thou to the forlorn to give ?

Seek thou to make earth better ; learn to sigh  
O'er others' sorrow and thine own shall cease ;  
The sorrow-cloud shall melt from out thy sky,  
The noisy tempest rock itself to peace.

My heart, be wiser, let thy striving be  
Not to be happy but be doing good ;  
So shall there come a blessing unto thee,  
And God shall feed thee with the angels' food.

---

### HOPE.

How strange is Hope—still couching 'mong our sorrows,  
Gilding To-day with light from our To-morrows ;  
And though oft shining with delusive glow,  
Our hopes like roses blighted as they blow,  
Still comes the new and undespairing Morrow  
To whisper Hope into the ear of sorrow.

## SPRING.

HEED not, O Spring, though cold winds blow,  
Come with thy gentle charms ;  
Thou nursling of the storm and snow,  
Wake from old Winter's arms.

Thus thought I 'mid the young year's showers,  
When, lo ! thy breath forth sped  
And whispered to the buds and flowers :  
" Rise from your graves, ye dead."

I saw thee with young eager face  
Rise as from troubled rest ;  
I saw thee with thy cold hand place  
A snowdrop on thy breast.

I saw thee on a later day  
Within a meadow stand ;  
While thou didst weave a chaplet gay  
Of daisies in thy hand.

I heard the birds by wood and stream  
Around me carol loud,  
And larks, as in celestial dream,  
Fling music from the cloud.

I felt a joy surpassing mirth,  
And as I looked there ran  
New life throughout the veins of earth  
And in the heart of man.

Each day thy cheek became, methought,  
More beautiful to see,  
And every night in secret wrought  
A greener robe for thee.

Thy cheek all wet with April showers,  
And love-light in thine eye,  
I saw thee smile among thy flowers,  
And into Summer die.

---

SUMMER.

BLITHE Summer, tripping o'er the lea,  
And with thy cheeks aglow,  
I warmed my heart with thought of thee  
Amid the Winter's snow.

And now thou comest, young and fair,  
The golden hours to bring ;  
How rich thou art ! for thou art heir  
To all the wealth of Spring.

Blest wand'rer, lavishing thy wealth  
On wood and plain and shore,  
Where'er thou roamest breathing health  
In every open door.

O Summer bright, how beautiful  
The freshness of thy leaves,  
The splendour of thy days, the cool  
Of thy delicious eves !

I bless thee for thy climbing suns  
That build earth's leafy bowers,  
I bless thee for the breeze that runs  
To bring me breath of flowers.

And all things love thee, season gay :  
The lamb upon the lea,  
The bird upon the bending spray,  
And childhood in its glee.

Thou bringest to the youth love's dream,  
And to the maid fond sighs ;  
The rapture of young hearts, the gleam  
In love-awakened eyes.

Age brings no shadow to thy face,  
Thou diest in thy charms,  
And lay'st thy treasure and thy grace  
In ruddy Autumn's arms.

---

AUTUMN.

ALL sunbrowned and begirt with peace,  
Bland Autumn, thou art here ;  
*Thou* givest meaning to the months,  
*Thou* crownest all the year.

For thee bleak Winter howls his storms,  
Spring greeneth on the lea,  
And Summer smiles—the seasons thus  
Find perfectness in thee.

A wheaten chaplet, ripe and gay,  
Thou wearest on thy head ;  
Thou singest through the fields, thy cheeks,  
As thine own apples, red.

How thou rejoicest in the laugh  
Of reapers 'mong the corn !  
Thou fillest the green lap of earth  
With plenty from thy horn.

Thy cunning hand hangs juicy fruits  
On bush and bending tree ;  
O joy, to gather clustered nuts  
In the wild woods with thee !

I bless thee as all men must bless ;  
Yet, Autumn, when I hark,  
I miss from out thy shining skies  
The singing of the lark.

On all the little tuneful throats  
Strange silencing hath come,  
As if, like man, they sang in *hope*,  
And, their hopes crowned, are dumb.

To me, when fades thy cheek, thou art  
As Summer's glory dear,  
Nor vainly russet woods put on  
Their monitory sear.

Thy work all done, thou lay'st thee down  
Resignedly to die,  
And earth grows desolate again  
With Winter in the sky.

---

## WINTER.

HAIL, monarch of the dying year,  
Hail to thy rugged brow!  
Thy breath hath swept the forest bare,  
No flatterer art thou.

Yet kindly dost thou eye our mirth  
Around the blazing fire ;  
What glee as on we heap the coal  
Or pile the log yet higher !

Gay laughter dances in our eyes  
As jest and song go round ;  
What care we though thou stand'st without  
With icicles all crowned !

How beautiful to watch thy snows  
Fall in fantastic forms !  
How terrible to hear thee rock  
The cradle of the storms !

Thy frost with biting tooth comes forth  
From his unknown retreat,  
And, lo, the shining wave becomes  
A highway for our feet !



Even when thou bind'st with icy chains,  
Sweet mercy warms thy breast ;  
With what a mother's voice thou say'st,  
"Take now, O earth, thy rest."

And earth sleeps soundly in thy lap,  
Though winds blow keen and wild,  
And with thy swaddling-band of snow  
Thou wrapp'st her like a child.

But soon she shall awake refreshed,  
And birds begin to sing ;  
And thou shalt lead, with willing hand,  
The young year to the Spring.

---

## NIGHT.

How beautiful the falling night  
While dim stars build her crown !  
The young moon hastes her lamp to light  
And sends her greeting down.

Night comes with cooling dews again,  
Although no eye can mark ;  
She heedeth not the praise of men,  
She blesseth in the dark.

She brings the boon of peace to all,  
The bird unto its nest,  
The lowing herd unto the stall,  
And man unto his rest.

The day's vain tumult she doth calm,  
She bids the floweret close,  
On weary eyes she sheds the balm  
Of merciful repose.

How sweet, while all in silence lies  
And happy dreams have birth,  
To see fond night, with starry eyes,  
Watch o'er the sleeping earth !

---

HOLIDAY.

I LONG for Nature's dear delights,  
To muse by mountain rills,  
And gather tranquil thoughts that grow  
In silence of the hills.

I long to hear, round dewy flowers,  
The humming of the bees,  
And taste, on seldom-trodden ways,  
The freshness of the breeze.

A pang-like feeling in my heart  
Throbs for a glimpse of sea,  
And to behold in quiet nooks  
The blossom on the tree.

I long to hear the thrush's note  
Bid evening woods rejoice ;  
I long for it as lover longs  
For his beloved's voice.

Thus sighed I 'mid the city's din ;  
But soon came happy days,  
When sweet peace met me as a friend,  
On solitary ways.

I trod the healthful upland heights,  
I drank the mountain rill,  
I felt what joy grows wild, amid  
The heather of the hill.

I brushed through tangle of the glen,  
And startled the wild bee ;  
I breasted, with a high delight,  
The billows of the sea.

The breezes took my heart's dull cares,  
And scattered them in play ;  
The mountains looked on them, and lo !  
They fled, ashamed, away !

The silence where pure thoughts are born,  
From which each vile thing flees,  
The solitude that dumbly broods,  
They awed me to my knees !

Mysterious feeling ! snatching me  
From weariness and care,  
Lifting my spirit to the height  
Of a diviner air.

A feeling mighty, although vague,  
Of subtle power and scope ;  
A rapture and a recompense,  
A memory, a hope !

---

## THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE.

AH me, the wild, the weary nicht,  
I canna sleep nor rest ;  
I wonder how my bairn can lie  
And slumber on my breast.  
I canna calm me doon to pray,  
My child I scarce can kiss.  
O God, my Donald on the sea  
On sic a nicht as this !  
How terrible to sit alane  
And hear the billows dash !  
To watch the lightning while the storm  
Half drowns the thunder-crash !  
Wae's me ! the wild winds how they rave !  
The wild waves how they flee !  
On sic a nicht his boat is but  
A cockle on the sea.  
But now there is a blessèd lull—  
Perhaps the storm is o'er ;  
Thank Heaven—but no, it bursts again—  
And wilder than before.

His arms are weary at the oar,  
And I nae help can bring ;  
Ah, Donald, I can only weep  
And helpless hands here wring.

Thou smilest, bairnie, while I weep ;  
What means thy childish mirth ?  
Thou smilest, though perchance thou art  
An orphan on the earth.

Sweet Mercy, is that Donald's voice  
Abune the tempest's roar ?  
His trusty boat, I make her out,  
He heads her for the shore.

A crowd is gathered on the quay ;  
They answer him fu' glad ;  
They sent up mickle prayer the day  
For my puir fisher lad.

Again he calls wi' cheery voice—  
That call he means for me.  
O God ! 'tis Thou, 'tis Thou hast saved  
My Donald frae the sea.

Smile on, my bairnie ; each loud blast  
Brought terror unto me,  
But thou wert wiser ; for kind Heaven  
Revealed it unto thee.

## HYMN—BELIEVER TO JESUS.

JESUS, man's Almighty Friend,  
At Thy mercy-seat I bend ;  
Thou hast taught my soul to flee  
In its darkness unto Thee,  
Refuge of the heart forlorn,  
Comforter of those who mourn !

Human weakness Thou dost know,  
Human weariness and woe ;  
For of old Thou took'st Thy seat,  
Weary with the noonday heat,  
On the well's refreshing brink  
Asking of the woman drink.

Lord, Thy life yet wafts to me  
Balm from fields of Galilee !  
How Thy promises of rest  
Still the throbbings of my breast !  
And no day to me so bright  
As Gethsemane's lone night.

Son of God, from Heaven come down,  
Son of Man, with sorrow's crown,  
Buffeted 'midst laughter rude  
Of the mocking multitude,  
On Thy back the cruel gash  
As it quivers with the lash.

When I see Thy cross of woe  
And Thy wounds for me that flow,  
When I mark Thy latest breath,  
And Thy cheek all pale in death,  
When I think such lot was Thine  
What are deepest woes of mine ?

How my burden lighter grows  
In the shadow of Thy woes !  
To Thy Cross I lift mine eyes,  
In my heart new hopes arise,  
And my sorrows seem to be  
Buried in the grave with Thee.

---

## HYMN—JESUS TO BELIEVER.

COME, thou soul perplexed and sad,  
Come, and let me make thee glad ;  
Tell thy sorrows unto Me,  
And thy sorrows all shall flee ;  
Pain and sadness, well I know,  
Are man's heritage below.

Come, thou weary one, and say,  
Art thou weary with the way ?  
Art thou saddened with the strife  
And the bitterness of life ?  
Let me Heaven's sweet grace impart  
To the Marah of thy heart.

Is thy burden hard to bear ?  
In thy burden let Me share !  
Thou forgettest, soul forlorn,  
That a cross I, too, have borne :  
Long ago I carried Mine,  
Let Me help to carry thine.

In thy trials look above,  
And remember "God is love" :  
When the darkness clouds thy sight,  
Still remember "God is light" :  
On the cross thy sins I bore ;  
Come and weep vain tears no more !

Look, and to thy wondering eyes  
Glories manifold shall rise ;  
For thy weary brow behold .  
In My hand a crown of gold ;  
Rivers of delight here glide,  
Thou shalt taste them at My side.

---

### THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR.

I SEE the Saviour from the Supper rise  
And leave the Upper Room ;  
His steps tend slowly to that place of sighs,  
The Garden with its gloom :  
Ah, what a cup is mingled for Him now,  
What tenfold horror settles on His brow !



Exulting Hell is gathered to the sight,  
Heaven, too, in dumb amaze ;  
Engulphed in darkness deeper than the night,  
The prostrate Saviour prays :  
How dark His soul ! but darkness is not doubt,  
Nor in the tempest will Heaven's lamps go out.

*Created 'mid Hosannas of the skies,*  
Earth is *redeemed* in night ;  
In Jesu's agony and wrestling cries  
Behold earth's saddest sight .  
Heart death-dejected, eyes bewept and dim,  
Haste, mighty angel, haste to strengthen Him.

The Holy One—great bearer of our name—  
Accepts from God the cup ;  
That dreaded cup of human sin and shame,  
Christ's lips will drink it up !  
O ransomed Earth ! rejoice while ages run,  
For dark Gethsemane is Heaven begun.

Come now, O Judas, with thine armed men,  
And with thy treacherous kiss !  
Behold those sad-upbraiding eyes again,  
Then sink in the abyss :  
The hour is come ; the fated band appears,  
And the pale moonlight glitters on their spears.

See ! they reel back at sight of that strange face  
    So worn, so sorrow-marred,  
So noble, with a more than mortal grace,  
    Yet as with thunder scarred !  
Why comes this band with its insulting spear ?  
'Tis Jesus, not Barabbas, that is here.

But now He lets them wreak on Him their will ;  
    They bind those wasted hands ;  
Relentless malice now may drink its fill ;  
    Unmurmuring He stands :  
He stands alone, the meek, the pure, the good,  
Fronting the menace of the multitude.

Not fronting it with hate's indignant frown,  
    Nor with pride's cold disdain,  
But as the King of Sorrow with His crown  
    Of weariness and pain :  
There in the moonlight manacled He stands,  
His state laid by, the sceptre from His hands.

On that mild face the cruel buffets fall ;  
    They blindfold those sad eyes ;  
They hurry Him from mocking hall to hall  
    Amid insensate cries.  
Son of the Highest, full of heaven's own grace,  
They spit their venom on Thy tear-stained face.

Hail, greater Monarch with Thy crown of thorns  
Than proudest king that day !  
'Mid execrations and a thousand scorns  
They lead the Christ away :  
At Pilate's bidding, as if Hell did urge,  
See those bare shoulders quiver with the scourge !

He bows defenceless in a storm like this,  
Yet silent through it all !  
The Rulers quaff their cup of vengeful bliss,  
Soon to be turned to gall :  
No more they need the multitude to urge,  
To Calvary the heedless thousands surge.

On Calvary, thrice-holy ground for aye,  
The fatal cross is raised ;  
Behold the Godlike bleed His life away !  
The mid-day sun, amazed,  
Forgets its shining, and untimely night  
Wraps with its mantle the too-hideous sight.

He blesses others even when hanging there  
In life's expiring throes ;  
Hark ! through the darkness there ascends a prayer  
For mercy on His foes :  
Resistless Magnet ! drawing all above ;  
Divine Compassion and diviner Love.

Heaven's bleeding Victim ! He has travelled far,  
But now the end is here ;  
The Prince of Peace dies 'mid the clang of war,  
The soldier and his spear.  
O Love Eternal ! Thou for us hast trod  
The awful winepress of the wrath of God.

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## BETHANY.

BLEST Bethany, to me wreathed round  
With flowers that wither not,  
Thou art no ruin, as men say,  
Thou art a holy spot ;  
Thou gavest Jesus, love-bespread,  
A place where He might lay His head.  
  
The outcast Jesus finds in thee  
At least *one* open door  
Where welcome waits Him, ere He face  
The city's mad uproar,  
Where round Him, desolate, shall swell  
Earth's fury, and the surge of Hell.  
  
Blest home, where He forgot alike  
The malice of the proud  
And the short-lived and treacherous  
Hosannas of the crowd,  
And the loved three by friendship drew  
To higher heights than friendship knew.

Home, ever fragrant with the breath  
Of Mary's spikenard sweet ;  
I see her, with a gentle hand,  
Anointing Jesus' feet ;  
And with devotion's raptured air  
She wipes them with her flowing hair.

For Jesus had brought back from death  
The brother of her love,  
And often had entranced her ear  
With tidings from above,  
While Heaven's strange accents on His voice  
Made her heart tremble and rejoice.

And Lazarus, the loved, I see  
Sit in the hallowed room,  
And men gaze on him as to read  
The secrets of the tomb ;  
I see, too, busy Martha stand  
With ministry of heart and hand.

Blest three, who *last* showed Jesus love,  
Love that was half despair ;  
They saw men hate Him, yet for men  
He agonised in prayer,  
Until, in ecstasy of grace,  
All Heaven seemed gathered in His face.

O Bethany ! to Jesus dear,  
Whence He was loth to part,  
Methinks of all the earth thou wert  
The nearest to His heart ;  
And, as into the Heavens He passed,  
His fond eye rested on thee last.

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SORROW.

O SORROW ! all men vainly flee  
The swoop of thy dread wing ;  
What home may shut its door on thee ?  
What heart dost thou not wring ?

Thou mark'st the lonely watcher's fears  
Beside the weary bed,  
Thou hear'st the drip of falling tears  
On pale face of the dead.

At cottage door, at stately hall,  
The silent mourners stand ;  
Thou standest too—a funeral pall  
Thou holdest in thy hand.

They wend unto the churchyard mound,  
Their loved one down they lay ;  
They hearken to the strange, weird sound  
Of falling clay on clay.

What burning tears that blind the eyes  
Fall on the churchyard sod !  
What sobs of prayer that seem to rise  
Unanswered unto God !

Slow to their home sad steps they trace,  
Their dear one no more there ;  
Thou, too, return'st, and tak'st thy place  
Within the vacant chair.

They look at each familiar thing  
That speaks to them of *him* ;  
Each common sight and sound will bring  
Tears desolate and dim.

And o'er that home for days, for years,  
Thy darkening shadow flits ;  
Yet on the gleam of gathering tears,  
Hope, the bright angel, sits.

And God still comforts those who mourn ;  
For Sorrow is divine,  
And Jesus in their need will turn  
Earth's water into wine.

## PRAYER.

O PEACE! where may'st thou build thy nest  
Amid earth's sin and care?  
Where but within the lowly breast,  
Hushed in the calm of prayer?

Man of his greatness is bereft,  
Much is he doomed to bear;  
But pitying heaven to him hath left  
The miracle of prayer.

Unto his wrestling, God doth send  
Forgiveness for offence;  
Unto his weakness, God doth lend  
His own omnipotence.

When evil days their sorrows bring,  
O man, then upward look;  
To slay them, Prayer shall be thy sling  
And stone out of the brook.

Heed not too much earth's change or loss,  
A brighter day will shine:  
As Simon helped with Christ's own cross,  
So Christ will help with thine.



He walks with thee life's weary road ;  
And though thy friends be few, .  
O man, remember it is God  
With whom thou hast to do.

But hopes and promises like these  
To Prayer alone are given ;  
We cannot climb save on our knees  
The steep path unto heaven.

Prayer is our refuge and our strength  
Amid life's blinding showers,  
And like an angel plants at length  
Earth's desert sand with flowers.

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## HEAVEN.

THE gorgeous sunsets that have birth  
Are but transfigured mists of Earth ;  
The rose that sheds its fragrance round  
Distils it from the darksome ground ;  
So Heaven, that captivates our eyes,  
Is built out of our tears and sighs.

Though tears that blind us seem so frail,  
With God they wrestle and prevail ;

Though heavy-laden be our sighs,  
The faintest climb unto the skies,  
And Heaven, the beautiful, the glad,  
Its gate opes widest to the sad.

Fair Heaven, our treasure-house art thou ;  
Earth's jewels glitter on thy brow ;  
Thou keepest for us, in God's love,  
Our lost ones, drawing us above—  
The father who did guide our way,  
The mother on whose breast we lay.

And thus it comes, life's daily smart  
Is building Heaven within our heart ;  
The cross we bear through pain and strife  
Slow blooms into the tree of life ;  
And Jesus, to our wondering eyes,  
Shall read Earth's riddles in the skies.

There, knowledge is at length complete,  
Adoring at the Saviour's feet ;  
There, rapture kindles in each eye,  
The deeper as the years roll by ;  
For Heaven seems ever but begun,  
While the eternal ages run.

## TO MY WIFE IN HEAVEN.

THY hand, my Jeanie, moulders now in clay,  
 That grasped mine fondly on our wedding day ;  
 Those lips I kissed with such a pure delight  
 Lie cold and silent in the grave to-night,  
 While I sit lonely by my burnt-out fire,  
 And weep o'er joys that did with thee expire.

No more *thou* weepest, unless Heaven have tears ;  
 Enough the sorrows of our mortal years !  
 We stood together in the tempest's roar,  
 And in life's battle were both smitten sore ;  
 But thou wert bravest, and didst hide thy sighs,  
 And kissed the tears that gathered in mine eyes.

God turned our trials into peaceful hours,  
 When thou wert happy 'mong thy garden flowers ;  
 How dear to thee the quiet country air !  
 The hills of Overtoun to thee how fair !  
 Ah me ! that walk in dull November weather,  
 We little thought it our last walk together.

How patient wert thou, through thy weeks of pain,  
 When Hope stood weeping, and our prayers seemed vain !  
 And when Death's message reached thee from thy Lord,  
 "Home, home to Jesus," was thine only word :  
 Without a sigh, without one parting quiver,  
 Thy spirit passed into the heavens for ever.

Thou art not dead ! for love can never die ;  
I yet shall meet Heaven's welcome in thine eye ;  
Thy words shall fall in music on mine ears,  
Touched with the accent of diviner spheres,  
And Jesus' self shall teach our feet to stray  
Through the green pastures of eternal day.







